



you know what makes me happy
The fact that my future doesn't
have to be
Me in jail
Or in prison wit' no bail
It doesn't have to be
Me
Settling for so much less
And it's gonna be
Me
Pushing on in life to be the best

check out the rest of April's POW on page 5

Hey all, welcome to the latest edition of The Beat Within. This week's publication has the usual but always different onslaught of powerful commentaries, poems, art etc. for your reading pleasure, and we're honored to bring it to you.

Now before you turn the page to read the priceless work contributed by you important writers, we want to share with you what several of us did this past weekend. Well, it's been a long time coming, but after a series of emails and conversations with pro-program, youth advocate Counselor/Probation Officer Michael Arrington, The Beat Within has made it's way into the most notorious juvenile hall in land, Los Angeles' "Central Juvenile Hall." This past Saturday we started what we hope is a long relationship with the young people and the juvenile institutions in Los Angeles.

FYI, "Central Juvenile Hall" is one of the oldest juvenile halls in the country, it was built in 1912. It houses 6/700 young people on any given day. The facility is huge. In many ways it resembles an old CYA. It sits on 27 acres of land. Lots of land! And like most juvenile halls, the facility contains a juvenile court building, individual living units, court ordered schools, recreation fields, two swimming pools, two gyms, medical and mental health offices, a food prep building, laundry and supply areas, maintenance shop, chapel and transportation dispatch, plus a number of programs offering various services to the young people.

Going into the hall, we knew that for years the very popular and well received and respect Inside/Out Writers Program has been touching lives in this facility for many years. We have no intentions to challenge their work or cause any problems, we see it two ways, the more programs/outlets the merrier, as does our contact and friend Mr. Arrington. And, from our standpoint, The Beat Within is a whole lot different than Inside/Out, and that's not to knock their work or ours. But lets face it, we are nuts, we're a weekly publication!

So, Nick Jones, Perry Jones, Patricia Johnson and this editor, along with several hundred Beat Withins made our way into the Hall early Saturday morning. We flew out of Oakland in the early morning hours and reached juvenile hall by 10am. Greeted by Michael, after handing over our driver's license for visitor's path, we were escorted through a series of doors and yards to reach our destination the GU unit. A boys' unit, which houses the more serious cases.

Once settling in we conducted an outstanding workshop with the young men and staff who were present! From our perspective, these boys at first did not want anything to do with us, and that is understandable. You figure how many strangers come popping in saying this and that, conducting this and that, and are never seen again!?

Even Perry and Nick stated that this Hall environment was run and felt more like a CYA/prison. Regardless, after spending well over an hour with the young people, they were blown away by the paper, as were the staff (who were very kind to us), and by the end of our session the young people were very eager to connect with us, wanting us to return. Nick and Perry were priceless! I think Nick had the hardest challenge, given his former lifestyle, addressing almost all young gang members who did not want and would never admit to give him any respect, but in the end he won them over. As most of you know, or have lived it, but the LA gang culture goes back generations, more so than most counties in the Bat Area. The young people even look much more hardened. Many of these boys were fighting gang enhancement charges/murder charges. Meaning they were looking at years and years in CYA if not time in the adult prison system.

In a nutshell we told The Beat story, we spoke about the power writing and of our publication, we told our own stories, we kept it so real, plus, we even ran a Beat workshop and received some writings, handed out many, many Beats, and left the institution optimistic that this will be a long relationship with LA juvenile hall.

We do hope to be making the trip down south at least once every 4/6 weeks. We need to work on funding for that, as is the LA probation side who has embraced our work and MR. Arrington's efforts. Meaning, The Beat Within has been accepted into all the juvenile halls in LA County. We wish we could be down there on the daily. We are looking forward to the challenge and hearing the voices of the young men and women of LA.

What a nice way to start our 11th year!

OK, given we did not have an issue last week, due to the Labor Day Holiday, this week's issue features all the writings from issue 11.34 and half of 11.35. Next week's Beat will feature the remainder of 11.35 and all of 11.36.

The topics for 11.34 were "Why Is Life Worth Living?" - Considering all the trials and tribulations that you've endured up until this point in life, is there anything or anyone that inspires you to move on, regardless of the harsh realities that one must live through and learn from? For some people the past and the question marks behind the future can drive a person to the point of giving up on life all together. On the other hand you have those who are able to live life for what it's worth, no matter what! So the question today is this, what is the value of your life and dreams that makes

striving another day worth it all in the long run? Is it your loved ones? A role model?

Is it proving the system and those who doubt you wrong? Is it freedom? School? What? Tell us in your own words why life is worth living for.

Our second topic, "Customizing Your Own Comfort Zone" - Has someone ever told you that you that you act like "you're in your own little world?" If this was possible and you could create your own comfort zone that you could confine in for peace of mind, what would this place be like and what are some of the things that would be included?

For instance, what kind of music would you play in your comfort zone? What things and what types of people would you want to see there? What kind of environment would be in your zone? Would it be secluded like on an island? Or would you be around a whole lot of people like in a major city such as New York? If you already have a comfort zone, tell us about it? Maybe it's in your car, your bedroom, a good book, anything. So break it down!

Lastly, "This Pain" - It Pains Me To See...

For issue 11.35, the topics were "Nothing More Racist Than That" - In a recent speech, the Reverend Al Sharpton — the African-American Civil Rights leader and candidate for President of the United States in 2004 — said this: "I think we have allowed a whole generation of young (black) people to feel that if they're focused, they're not black enough. If they speak well and act well, they're acting white... and there's nothing more racist than that!" What The Beat wants to know is, what do you think Rev. Sharpton meant by this, and do you agree or disagree. Tell us why.

The second topic, "What Makes Your Smile Disappear?" - From time to time we all have joyful moments when that smile of beauty appears on our face. What we want to know is what makes that smile turn into a frown? What makes it disappear? What can trigger your mind to bring your happiness to an end? Describe to us a time where you felt happy, but the happiness faded away, and the smile disappeared into the air.

Last topic but not least, "Ticket Out" - This week we want you to tell us what you think is your ticket out of the system, off the streets and away from negative violent living? We have all heard stories about famous and not so famous finding this ticket out of this hard living, because of a mentor, a job, their lyrical/writing gifts, their athleticism, or simply believing in a better way and their hunger/drive to get up and out, and not look back to their old ways. In detail, tell us what you honestly believe is your ticket out of the chaos and what will it take to reach that destination. If you really think you are stuck, and there is no ticket out for you, then spell that out for us too.

For your information, if any of these topics move you, and you want to write on them for a future Beat, by all means do so!

Before we announce this week's POW (Piece Of The Week) winners, lets give you another topic to consider writing on! The time is now to consider submitting a piece to our 16th editorial note writing contest! The topic to consider is, "A Letter To The President." For this contest we want you serious writers to write a letter to President Bush! It is our goal to not only post these letters in The Beat Within publication and our website, but to send them off to the White House too! Now, do we need to suggest topics on what to talk about? Doubt it. So with this said, our contest question is all about you writing a letter to President Bush.

The deadline, deadline will be Election Day, Tuesday, November 7, 2006. As is the case with all of our writing contests, that all pieces submitted will be featured in the BWO (Beat Without) section of the "big" Beat over several issues. And once all featured, The Beat editors will read and vote on their four favorites. From these reads, our top-vote-getter will receive a one-hundred-dollar money order. Our second place winner will get a fifty-dollar money order. And our third and fourth place winners will receive twenty-five-dollar money orders. Good luck writers!

Now, lets take a deep breath, 'cause you are almost finish with this editorial note ramble, and then you have a near hundred or so pages to read to complete The Beat! Ha!

Big props to our POW winners Allen and Joseph from Arizona, James (who writes 2) from Marin, and Tay from Walden House PSK. From the 150 Crew we have M-Roy, Lil' Dewy, Rush, Wayne, Jacob, and Big Vic (who writes 2). Last but not least we have Uce-B (who writes 2), April (who writes 2), Whiteboy, Goofy (who writes 2), Ralph One, Young Bird, Mark, and Lil' Sexy all from SF/YGC.

All right, this issue, hands down, goes out to Mr. Michael Arrington our new friend and colleague who believes in The Beat Within so much that he has made our dream come true in getting The Beat Within publication and workshops into Central Juvenile Hall in Los Angeles. Michael may you continue to do the good work in your community, and may our special relationship continue to grow with the good work you are already doing. We thank you for having the courage to give your young people a voice and making believers out of the powers that be. It is our hope that we all learn from the voices from within that must be heard. Need we say more? Read on...

Till next week!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Remembering The Past

I remember my life being as perfect as it could have been at the time. Then all of a sudden it seemed my life was drastically altered by a few words, "I'm in". That was like a new world to me so I was interested in it.

My life isn't as I thought it would be. All the pain and emotional anguish since I joined the gang. My grades went from straight A's to straight F's in a matter of months. My relationships with friends and family went to hell. Now I have only a couple members of my family by my side. Almost all my homies now are affiliated one way or another.

Within the past two years on probation, I've been locked up almost one year. It would have been longer but I ran for seven months. That was by far the stupidest thing I could have done. Now I'm looking at 6-9 months in juvenile prison. At first I was thinking, "It ain't no thang", but then I got word, mi abuelita was in the hospital. It made me think for the first time in months my family is more important than my varrio.

They say, "Where are your homies at when you're in here?" I used to be a smart ass and say, "They're on the unit or block next door". But now I see what they meant. They were trying to say - who can write you? Who can visit you?, and who are you allowed to call? - YOUR FAMILY. When you get out, who is there for you but your "boys" with a new recruit to take your place. Your like, "Cool...Lets post it and get some rucás tú sabés".

I've made a gang of mistakes, but the one I regret the most is not believing that I didn't need them. As I sit here one week from sentencing I look back at my life remembering how good it was and then how it suddenly changed direction.

My future didn't have no jail, gangs, juvenile prison, getting jumped, or getting stabbed. I had so much promise. I could have been something by now. It took me five years of gangs to realize that ain't what I want in life. I see and know that I have so much potential, now that I have actually taken time out to look hard at myself. Now, when (not "if") I get my GED, I'm going to go to a community college.

So, don't think for one second that you can't get out of the hood. Think about it this way.... The hood is where you live....not who you are!!

-Allen, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Wow! Your message is a really powerful one. I love the last line of your entry, "The hood is where you live...not who you are". That is extremely eye-opening and true. You and you alone choose to be who you are. You can choose to allow your hood to influence you in a positive or negative way. Neighborhoods and communities all have culture - both positive and negative. You can choose which part of your hood you get involved in. Do you choose to be an optimistic leader and advocate for your hood and people or do you choose to be a gang member and destroyer of your community? You choose. Remember your past....learn from your mistakes.....and realize that your future is not yet created. You are an artist and create the future you want.

Facin' the truth is hard enough.

Didn't know life could get so tough.

You know I miss you.

I will never forget you.

The Machine

This machine I think about. It has no emotions, no face, no warm blood, no family, no friends, no loyalty, no memory, and no future. The time machine only knows the now, this year, this month, this week, this day, this hour, this minute, this second, and counting. It is programmed to laugh, to smile, to lie, to market, to promote and sell, to consume the hopes of humanity. While the line of seduction moves the humans rapidly forward into the mouth of the machines like next, next, next, next. Swallowed alive and never to return to their innocence.

-Uce-B B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You bring a frightening vision of the world you see, and you force us, in just a few sentences, to share your vision, whether we want to or not. This is writing of the first order. Do you believe that "da hopes of humanity" are so impossible to reach that they're not worth wasting your time with, or do you still keep some of those hopes alive somewhere inside you? (Your amazing writing talents don't always work in your favor with The Beat. While we can easily see the piece you wrote about your tribe being published in some magazines, we decided we couldn't it because your descriptions were too powerful, too seductively negative, too real - and too direct an invitation into a world that leads children into hell.)

Next Lifetime

It's been a few years

No smiles,

No laughs,

Nothing but tears.

Tears of what?

Tears of fear

'Cause I don't have you,

Not touching you,

Not seeing you.

At times I can't sleep at night.

Getting through the days is a hell of a fight.

At times I feel like I'm 'bout to crack.

'Cause your not here to have my back..

Why you gotta leave me like that?

You see a smile on my face but it's just a mask.

Don't take it personal

But don't bother to ask.

You're now a ghost,

Here in my heart is where I miss you the most.

No one feels my pain.

Now I'm lost on the map.

You see where I was in my past I didn't know how to act.

I know I ain't perfect but

Giving my life up for you is worth it.

From the seconds to the minutes

To the hours to the days

To months of my years

It'll be forever/

Facin' the truth is hard enough.

Didn't know life could get so tough.

You know I miss you.

I will never forget you.

I pray one day God will let

My spirits fly.

Three years of pain -

What can I gain?

I'd die right now just to see you.

Again that's just a dream.

Mom I'll see you in the next lifetime.

-M-Roy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is an incredibly moving piece and probably not easy to write. When someone special to us passes away, particularly a parent, there is no greater pain. There are no words of comfort and it feels as though nothing will ever right again because that person will not be around. Time will help unload some of the anguish but you are right - the sense of loss will always be with you. It sounds like your mother was an incredible woman, who no doubt wanted the best for you. We hope you make the best of your time when you are back on the outs and not just for your mother, but also for you. She wouldn't have it any other way, right?

Settling For Less Hurts

It pains me to see...
 Myself in purple and khaki
 It pains me to see
 Myself somewhere I don't wanna be
 Like up in jail
 Or in the future
 In prison with no bail
 What does it pain me to see?
 It pains me to see everything that I could be
 To see myself settling for so much less
 When I really should be pushing to be the best
 It pains me because...
 I have so much more goin' for me
 And there's so much more that I wanna be
 It pains me to think of how my mom just feels
 When she has to see
 Her baby
 In purple and khaki
 But you know what makes me happy
 The fact that my future doesn't have to be
 Me in jail
 Or in prison wit' no bail
 It doesn't have to be
 Me
 Settling for so much less
 And it's gonna be
 Me
 Pushing on in life to be the best
 What would I like to see?
 I'd like to see the best
 Coming from me

-April GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There is a lot we love about this wonderful poem, April. You have clearly laid out what makes you unhappy about where you are and how you got here, but you don't point the finger at the system or anyone else. You accept your own responsibility — which is why we believe you when you see a future for yourself that doesn't include having to wear a uniform (and someone other girl's clothes), or sitting in a cell writing beautiful poetry! We especially love that last line because it tells us you are looking at the right place for the changes you want — and that's squarely at yourself. Keep it up!

Inside He Died

A child born
 Without a comfort zone
 Born in darkness
 All his life
 He searched for light
 His heart grew cold
 From being alone
 He kept a humble appearance
 A good kid inside
 But hatred was his sin
 So in the inside he died
 Died, and died 'cause no one ever understood
 Trapped in the ghetto, trapped in the 'hood
 A demon he was, he tried to be good
 Every time he promised he would
 In one person one day he found sunshine
 A person that changed him

-Bijore B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: No child should have to grow up in the way you describe your own life. But you have such skills as a poet, that your ending makes us want to read the next poem — the one that tells us about this person who's changed your life. Who is he or she? In what way has your life been changed? What will this change mean when you get out of here? Will be enough to keep you out?

What Makes My Smile Disappear

What makes me mad and also makes my smile go away is racism. I hate dat shhh! For real, for real! Even though I'm white/Mexican, I just hate it. I don't feel that shhh! My lil' homie is Mexican/ black, so it offend me. Also, most my extended family/ friends is mostly black. It makes me hella mad.

One example of how this make me mad is me, my bra, and my one patna (who now I heard is a snitch), but back then he was fambam! We was walkin' an' this one white dude walked by and called my old best friend the N word. I heard that an' just snapped! Before my patna could even say a word, I took off on dude and busted his nose!

I ain't gon get into all that detail 'cause that's not the message. The message is you ain't got to be colored to hate racism! I just don't feel discrimination against someone 'cause dey race or religion. That ain't right. It's messed up! For real, for real it don't make no sense.

The first person was found next to Africa and Asia, an' The only reason your colors is different is 'cause our ancestors migrated and less sun shined on certain spots of the earth! So really, we all brothers/ family! So really that's what make my smile go an' get me mad an' "hot" — make me wanna bank someone! So really stop the racism!

Peace out.

-Whiteboy B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We absolutely agree with you. Race, as a way to divide us and make us think we're different, has no basis in science but only in our minds, our belief systems. If you can learn to act with the understanding that "we all brothers/family" then there's really no reason ever to get yourself locked up. What do you think the basis of racism is? If you agree with us that it's ignorance (a belief in something that isn't real), then hitting the racist on the nose doesn't sound like a very effective way of addressing the problem. The cure for ignorance is education. You've got some knowledge that a lot of people lack. Use it to educate. Anyone can use their fists or weapons to go off on someone, but not anyone can teach. Time to step into a new dimension...

It Pains Me To See In My Dreams

it pains me to see
 i'm killing you
 you're killing me
 you are tryin'a take my soul
 it's simple feeling
 in my dream last night i seen me
 being hung by a tree
 somewhere in a grave is where
 i don't wanna be
 name on a front page
 because i died at a young age
 mom crying
 seeing me getting wheeled into a grave
 i hear foot steps
 "j-t run, they're coming"
 i can't move
 it's death songs i hear them humming
 they've surrounded me
 now they're hurting me
 and i can't breathe
 boom, boom, boom,
 it's not what it seems
 "damn, j-t, it was just a dream"

-Lil J-T, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In dreams begin responsibilities, and you don't need to continue risking your freedom and your life living a life that's half-wrong and half-right. No more compromises, 'cause the consequences of even victimless crimes, will have you dreaming of dying. Maybe it's a metaphor for no longer being able to live your life on the outside. A cell is like a grave in a way, 'cause metaphorically you're buried away from your moms and family — and that's a calamity that in dreams, seems like death itself, or worse, being buried alive. Nothing else to do now but serve your time and get your mind (and future life) right.

To Whom It May Concern

What's up it do Beat Readers? W'at's crackin wit' y'all? Hopefully keepin' your head up and staying trucha just like me. Well check me out. Sometimes people ask me why I joined a gang. I never really answered them 'cause they probably wouldn't understand. But those interested here it goes.

There are a few reasons why I joined my 'hood. I was basically raised into it, not by my parents buy by my uncles and friends. I didn't wake up one day and say, "Hmmm, this seems like a good day to start bangin'." Nope, that wasn't me. I felt like I fit in with the homies. Back then I could easily see myself as a big homie, but I could never really see myself as doctor, teacher, or lawyer.

Life was different back then. There wasn't so many worries. It was all fun and games. That's how I fell in love wit' the 'hood. They showed me love and brainwashed my young crooked mind into the gang lifestyle, sex, money, drugs, organization, and dirty business. I was taught a lot and kept it all in my brain. I can say that I'm proud for what I was taught, but I'm not proud of how my life is turning out.

I've been bangin' since a young age. And after I learned a few things the hard way and learned from my mistakes, I know I wouldn't have made half the choices back then if I had the knowledge and mentality I have now. And even though I've made unfixable mistakes, for some reason, I only regret a couple, but all the rest have helped me step my game up and think and re-think of what I'm doing in my life.

Well another thing people have asked me is why don't you get out of your gang. I usually just tell 'em I can't 'cause I don't wanna explain, or get into that subject with them, but today I'm on one, so here it goes. It was made pretty clear to me when I got jumped in that there's one way in and no way out. I could take the easy way out of the 'hood and ride out in the casket 6 ft. deep, but like I said before, "I like breathing." Yo amo a mi barrio (I love my 'hood) and there ain't no one that can take that love away. It's my second family. But I love my 'hood and homies to a certain point.

Out of so many homies I got, there are only a few that would take a bullet for me as I would take it for them. We have proved it to each other throughout the years. To tell y'all the truth, I don't wanna stop bangin' 'cause I got too much anger and hate for my rivals. It's been like that since 1999 when one of my cousin's passed away. Since I was young I've had a lot of anger inside of me. It just keeps on adding up. It's hard to put in words how I feel and describe it. People have always expected me to fail. Even my mom told me once I was a lost cause. I only had two choices left. Prove them right, or prove them wrong. Right now I'm focused on proving them wrong and being successful in my life. It's a long ladder to climb and I just started. Talk is cheap right? That's why I'm letting my actions speak for me. And as a matter of fact, I'ma stop writing and talking right now. Much love and respect al rato.

-Goofy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We are honored that you trust The Beat enough to answer these questions, the why and why not... We admire you for your honesty, and we have sympathy for the losses you have endured. But at the same time, there comes a time to deal with that anger in a way that doesn't let them dismiss you as a failure, that doesn't end up hurting you more than it hurts those you are angry at. (And if you let yourself think about it, you realize that your "enemies" are raised on just the same anger and hatred you harbor for them...) Talk is not necessarily cheap when it's honored. We believe you've taken enough bullets. You don't need to take any more for anyone.

Why Is Life Worth Living

What's up homies. How y'all doin'? Espero que están firme. Well, on the topic about life worth living, I do think my life is worth living regardless of all the trials and tribulations I've been through and the ones I'm going to go through. I have a baby boy that I gotta live for, and take care of as soon as I get out. I haven't seen him for almost five months, and it makes me sad, mad, and also angry at myself for being in this situation.

But at the same time it gives me motivation to keep going and smash out this tiempo I got hanging over my head. I plan on going to college someday and doing something with my life so I can be a good role model and be someone to look up to. You should know by now that a diploma doesn't do much for you nowadays. Jobs are asking for college degrees and some other shhh. I ain't trying to be no sucka. I'm trying to give my son the best I can give him. Everything I couldn't have.

Well another thing that makes my life worth living is my whole family. If I didn't have a family there wouldn't be a reason to live. To me that's what life is for. Spending it with your family. What would happen if we were to die? Think about it. Yes, your family and a few homies would visit your grave. But for how long? Maybe a couple years you wont get a visitor in months. That's real.

Well times up. To all doing time, keep your head up, stay trucha y al rato.

-Goofy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Another homerun, Goofy. You stand between two generations, and each is a reason for the others to live. You know what we think of your mind and your intelligence. It is obvious that you're blessed with a good brain, and that should be your ticket out. But you have other constraints on your free choices besides the law, and it will have to rely on that superior brain to let you break those chains too. We don't want to burden you, but we have high expectations for you. Let's see what happens.

You should know by now that a diploma doesn't do much for you nowadays. Jobs are asking for college degrees and some other shhh.

Can't Cry

Have you ever experienced when you can't cry?
So much pain, yo' eyes dry
People call me bad, but don't know where I been
Over fifteen funerals before the age ten
I still got a mama and I love her to death
It got kinda hard tryna raise me herself
I never give an excuse for the things I did
But I really can't regret the way I live
Had to get respect by any means
Used to smash on cats with my surrounding teens
Naw, my dad didn't run out on me
But I seen him in a casket before I was three
Yea, Dad, I know you in heaven
Probably with my cousin Tj
Who got killed when I was eleven
Yea, I think about Rob and Mike
And I still can't cry
But my question everyday, is, "Man, Lord, Why?"
Now if you went through this stuff, would you cry?
I would too, but my eyes is dry

-James, Marin

From The Beat: A lot of people cry inside because they don't want to appear to be weak. But we know that crying inside hurts just as bad as crying with tears, don't you think? We can't bring those who have passed on back into the physical world but we can keep them in our hearts and use our memories of them as motivation to keep pushing forward in life no matter how rough things get. Just think, they're no longer here but you are and you have your whole life in front of you. The question is what are you going to do with it... sink from sorrow or rise up through motivation and determination to success? At this point it's all on you.

Quick Money

Some people try and hustle
Some try to pull licks
But everyone tryna get rich
You pull a lick
And it's good til he snitch
You sellin' dope like it's take out
Next thing you know police is doin' a stake-out
Then you go down
Now you regrettin'
But too late, now you're in processin'
And soon you'll be in the carrot suit
But now think who made the quick money
A square white guy in a business suit

-Young Bird B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're impressed by how simply and quickly you told the story of the street, and still could add a layer of political commentary (your last two lines). Do square black guys in business suits also make money? We hope you turn your power of observation on as many targets as you experience (including your peers, the "system," and even on yourself), because you have some major skills at expressing them.

Arm Yourselves With Knowledge

My alias name is Raph One, and I am an urban artist in the city of San Francisco(Sucka Free, but not any more). I am here to educate you on the juvenile judicial system and how messed up it is.

First of all, for those of you young-ass kids out there that think the halls is something hard to deal with, you guys need to check yo'selves, because the halls is nothing compared to the pen, boys! The way that young-ass kids are acting in the eyes of today's society, you guys are gonna be in prison or YA by the time you're 21 years old, meaning that your not even gonna be old enough to even buy your own damn alcohol instead of going to your local Safeway and stealing it!

The halls is not a little baby jail you get sent to and be expected to learn your lesson and start a new life. It is basically a training facility that prepares you for prison or YA because that's what's gonna happen! Then your whole life is gonna be messed up because you are already incarcerated, before your 21...

I know that your thinkin' I'm just a ninja trying to tell you what to do, or just another ninja that just has nothing better to do than just tell y'all little ninjas off, or something, but that's not what's up. I'm slumped over this miserable desk writin' this, and my hand is all cramped to tell you all this because I want you guys to arm yourselves with knowledge.

The revolution is coming and it's going to be led by very strong-minded individuals, and those of you that are weak-minded and ignorant are going to be left behind. I only hope that I am the hell out of here by the time it starts, so I can only tell you this: my people take care of yourselves and make the right choice, because it needs to be made now, before it is too late, and you are left behind...

-Raph One B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We have heard that the revolution is just around the corner for many, many years. What makes you think it's here now? We definitely agree with your advice to everyone locked behind these walls that unless they educate themselves and prepare to live a different way than they've been living, they're only getting prepped for the darker, colder cells the system has waiting... And we also agree that knowledge is the best weapon of all. But how are you arming yourself with knowledge? What are you reading? Who do you admire? A revolution throws out the old and replaces it with the new. What is your idea of what has to go, and what it has to be replaced with?

Why?

People say we're the wealthiest country
So why are there homeless people on the streets begging
for lunch money?
Or could that be the reason why
Because the cost of living is so damn high?
Is that why parents run out on they're kids and don't say
good-bye?
Or give 'em up for adoption, before they open their eyes?
Is President Bush the one to blame
Because he gave our country such a bad name?
Why are our gas prices so high?
Maybe 'cause we're not the wealthiest country alive!
Why is Arnold Schwarzenegger our governor?
Last time I checked, he was the Terminator.
If our country is the healthiest and wealthiest
Then why are kids dying over they're graduation
necklace?
Why are there more jails than colleges?
People getting more graveyard flyers than they is
scholarships?
Why is it so hard to get rich, but easy to get poor?
Most deaths don't make it on TV no more.
Why are young girls being pimped?
Just so that guy can stack a few chips?
My questions were asked
So now I ask you this
Why?

-James, Marin

From The Beat: You're asking a lot of crucial questions about our country now, James. If someone asked you these questions, what would you answer? Why does the US invade a country that never hurt or threatened us? You already know a lot about what many consider profoundly wrong with this country. What do you know, from going to school, hanging wherever, about the pathology of the streets, whether it's something you've learned from personal experience or by listening to the game? Has any of these things happened to you? Can you write for The Beat what you've learned, wherever, no matter how raw it is?

Smile's Gone

My smile disappears when younstas spend their life fightin' every opportunity that comes their way. It's so sad to watch the smartest ones say nothing but, "Forget this, forget that, forget you!"

Why push everyone away? If they were really smart, they would take advantage of all the people in their lives focusing on them. The quickest way to get up out of the system is to flow with it, not rub up against it. Why not cooperate for a quick minute, get everyone off your back so you can do what the hell you want? Get over your pathetic ego and be above the system.

And for those of you who wanna take it a step further, try bein' like a sponge and soakin' up what people are tryin' to teach you. Information is information, no matter who's giving it to you. Don't miss out because of spite.

-Tay, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: This is so important to say, Tay, and we admire you for saying it. The sad part is that you've identified something that is part of childhood — thinking you already know everything you need to know. So it's very hard to break through this kind of non-thinking, since it goes with being a child! It's only when a young person matures to the level you have achieved that he or she can begin to see the world through adult eyes, and understand that there are important things that their parents have lived through and can pass on, and there are easier ways to get through the rough spots than to hit your head against the wall. Were you ever like the youngsters you describe here, fighting the opportunities that came your way? If so, what do you think are the most important ingredients for being able to move out of that child-like response and into mature responsibility?

The revolution is coming and it's going to be led by very strong-minded individuals,
and those of you that are weak-minded and ignorant are going to be left behind.

Fading Smiles

My smile fades and disappears
 When I see children drenched in tears
 My smile fades and disappears
 When the blood is freshly smeared
 My smile fades and disappears
 When young teenage parents struggle to find a career
 My smile fades and disappears
 Like it slowly has through all my years
 I've smiled once and never again
 But everything has
 To have an end
 I wonder why it didn't last
 Sheeted by memories of the past
 When I see my people struggling
 We can't continue without any loving
 Why smile when you know it's fake
 Do not steal if it's not yours to take
 Like I said, my smile fades
 Disappointed by all our selfish ways
 Why bring a child on to this earth
 Knowing it's doomed prior to birth
 Children smile 'cause they are too young to see
 That their parents are drowning in poverty
 As they grow their smiles tend to leave
 'Cause the hope they had is hard to believe
 I lost my smile when I got older
 The depression is all the way up to my shoulders
 I want it back, I want it soon
 I want to live free and eat lunch at noon
 In a park with sunny skies
 And off in the city no distant cries
 Just people living together in peace
 Will only happen when the violence will cease
 Everybody shouldn't be lying
 And recognize there's no longer smiling
 People deserve more than we posses
 No one should have to live in a world of regrets
 I just want to truly share a smile
 It's shame it won't happen for a long while
 My smile fades and disappears
 When my people can't confront their fears
 My smile fades and disappears
 When children neglected by parents busy drinking
 beers
 My smile fades and disappears
 When people share an ugly leer
 My smile is dying, it disappears
 It's sad that it's the way it appears

-Mark B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We are amazed by the skill you have to put such a poem together in the time of a single workshop! With these skills you can teach people who don't understand the life you see to have more sympathy for those whose smiles have disappeared because of the lives they are forced to live. What do you mean that you smiled once and never again? Did something specific and terrible happen to remove your smile, or was it a collection of things?

I want to live free
 and eat lunch at noon

In a park with sunny skies
 And off in the city no distant cries

The Home Of The Slaves?

Is this the land of the free
 Or the home of the slaves?
 Gas price sky high
 Can't raise minimum wage
 I'm seeing signs here and there
 And it's the end of our days
 The devil tryna get inside me
 But the Lord show me the way
 Is Bush the Anti-Christ?
 That got us going insane?
 Declare war in Middle East
 But we got war in our streets
 What?
 Dope feens feenin'
 Gang bangers dyin'
 Dope dealers dealin'
 What the white man supplyin'
 Preach...I ain't tryin'
 But don't make me get started
 Why girls twelve years old
 Is a grown man's target?
 I don't know...
 Well, check this
 Lil' boys think they grown
 Get a girl pregnant
 It ain't theirs
 Ain't that wrong?
 Now, tell me why?
 Why like this?
 Born into a world of sin
 To live in this mist
 I'm pissed...
 Court system tryna lock me away
 We got racist profiles in our system today
 Dear Lord, hard times, a young brotha can say
 That's why I cry silent tears and every night I pray

-Lewy Lew, Marin

From The Beat: You sure poured your heart out in this beautiful, brilliant, sad poem. You write like a real battle between the Lord and the devil is going down, fighting within you for influence. You write in such a raw way that it seems like you, yourself, have experienced much of what you describe. Is that right? We understand, the world is a mess so as the people living in it. The big question is: what can fix all this mess? What can we do to make things better, at least, little by little.

All It Took Was A Second

A time when my smile disappeared is when I was out in Berkeley at my girl's house. She cooked for me, I ate and then I headed to my brah's house. We kicked it for a bit and life was good. When we was walking out the door we see hella ambulances and police passing us. A big crowd started running passed us so me and brah ran right behind them to the big scene.

As we stood up hella happy, we looked in the middle of the street and see our other brah in the ambulance with a thick big pile of blood in the middle of the street. Instantly my smile dropped and tears started falling. Man just the fact that my brah was on a go-cart and got hit by a pickup truck his body was gone that was fast. I mean it just happen like that. Just like I had a good smile and just like that it disappeared into the air, that fast.

-Lil' Dewey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's crazy that life, in an instant, can be over just like that, without warning or anything. It's another lesson - what we have can be gone in just a second. We shouldn't let this scare us away from life, but it should make us appreciate it a lot more than most of us do. Take a look at where you are - we know you see more in your future than this. We know you want to look back and see better for yourself than this.

This Life This Pain

This life, this pain
 This love, this shame
 This joy, this game
 Life is sad but to play again
 To fall and get up
 To dust yourself off
 And not give up
 This one, try two
 Three times and people knew
 Suicide kept me blue
 Fatal thoughts, mental sought
 The battle must be fought
 To win the game of life
 To gamble like rolling dice
 To keep afloat
 By writing this little note
 To be heard without saying a word
 To like this life
 To keep from strife
 To be held close
 To want the most
 This life is worth livin'
 And not to be sittin'
 In these walls
 I must...
 Stand tall

-Joseph, Durango/Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Life is a battle worth winning. Getting up every day and facing our choices and our consequences without giving up. Your life is worth it. Keep up the positive thoughts in this very serious game of life.



The Love Within

Sitting in my room going way, way back,
 I'm that youngster thinking about the first day
 I saw my mama smoke that crack.
 So sad, so mad, I just want to crawl in a hole and die.
 Thinking about how she used to sit up and let my little brother
 cry. Now she gone, and I'm sitting in my room crying the
 blues, thinking about all the things we used to do.
 I'm missing you like crazy and I don't know what to do
 every time I'm in Brookfield people say I look just like you.
 You was my twin, now a part of me is gone,
 But reality has hit and
 I have to be strong.

-Rush, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow! Powerful and honest words. It's so unfair that a drug could steal your mamma away like that. What pain did she have in her life that she let herself choose that path, leaving her two children to fend for themselves? What can you do to avoid succumbing to the same pain and choosing an equally dangerous path? You've already been through so much and you're not even grown up yet. You must take what you've been through and find your strength in it, just like you say. We don't think it will be easy, but we are cheering you all the way.

thinking about the first day
 I saw my mama smoke that crack

Running Away From Myself

I'm looking in the mirror,
 But the girl I see,
 She doesn't look familiar.
 I mean, she has green eyes just like me
 But there's something about her that's just scary.
 She's looking at me lookin' at her.
 But still,
 Nothing I can see looks familiar!
 When I move, she moves right along with me
 But I still don't know how this can be
 The reflection I see, it just be me!
 So I sit there and think, then it hits me!
 She needs so badly for someone to love her,
 And that someone is me.
 So I reach out and try to touch her...
 But for some reason, she doesn't reach back
 Then all of a sudden, the whole mirror goes black...
 Where did she go? What did I do?
 That girl wasn't me, was she you?
 I turned to ask the person behind me
 There is no one there
 So I turn back around
 Then she reappears
 She looks at me looking at her
 She reaches for me, I reach for her
 We touch
 But still... I still hurt inside
 I look her dead in the eye
 And ask her why
 She doesn't answer
 I tell her "I feel so lonely, how can I be set free?"
 She said "Stop running away from me".

-April GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Here's another example of the insight you have, the sensitivity you feel — and the pain you carry with you. It's really a very, very nice piece of writing, April. It describes and pours out all the feeling and pain you feel inside. How did this happen? The you in the mirror is absolutely right about one thing — in order to love yourself, you have to turn and face yourself. You have to examine all of you, the beauty that shines through in a piece like this as well as the things that aren't beautiful. When you are able to embrace all of yourself, that love you're looking for will find its way to you. There's a reason you've been given these talents, and we feel confident that you are going to find that reason.

This Goes to Those

this goes to those
 who know anything about love
 this goes to those
 people whose hearts are frozen solid
 like the iceberg that sunk the titanic
 this goes to those
 who stay paranoid and all in a panic
 this goes to those
 whose hearts are like lions
 and stay ever so brave
 this goes to those
 who want to obviate all their pain
 this goes to those
 who are scared of anything
 and always afraid
 this goes to those
 who are straight and gay
 this goes to those
 this goes to those
 who are old and young
 this goes to those
 who hustle and carry a gun
 this goes to those
 who have or had something to defend
 this goes to those
 who
 want
 to
 know
 about
 life
 my friend

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If Walt Whitman's spirit might wake and hear it, he'd recognize the love you feel and share it as wholeheartedly as any who start to be feel recipient of your conscience, heirs to the lyrical miracle of transcendental love, reaching from the depths of hell to the highest heaven above above, dear friend, without end.

Life In The Streets

living in the bay man it's hard to survive
 we stay hustling, can't keep a nine-to-five
 see homeboys in handcuffs on channel two live
 now what's his family supposed to do when the bills
 arrive
 but shhh happens everyday and when it rains it
 freaking pours
 alcoholic tendencies keep me addicted to the coors
 young ass ninjas caught up in gang wars
 kids playing in the streets filled with fiends and drug
 lords
 we living in the ghetto where violence is very common
 samaritan house, powdered milk, and top ramen
 his father in prison, his mother's on crack
 a young teenage kid slanging out his back pack
 our lives are full of stress and home is sometimes hell
 only three ways out — success, death, or jail
 so when you wanna give up and you feel like you're
 stuck
 remember to stay strong and keep your head up

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your poetry hits like a two-fisted cyclone. The left fist packs pain while the right brings truth home. There's no way to succeed until you learn how to read truth plain and also overcome its unavoidable pain. One truth is simple to see but hard to change, and it starts with defeating the addict that lives in your brain. There's only one way to win that fight — starve him to death, both day and night. Take it as the fundamental practice of spiritual warfare, 'cause when you find the inner strength to stay clean and sober, you'll have the mental power to get over each obstacle you meet on the path to success, prosperity, freedom and peace.

Depressed

man i'm stressing
 struggling wit' this depression
 from every mistake, everything i see
 i learn a lesson
 the system is not made to rehabilitate
 it's made to keep you guessing
 i'm on the verge of a breakdown
 this is a turning point in my life
 no turning back now
 i try to be happy or smile
 but all i think is man
 i'm down for a while
 everybody wants to be hard
 but man that's not my style
 i feel pain but no one hears the sound
 all they see is a frown
 i'm trying not to break
 i try to love but all i feel is hate
 why is my mind in this foul state
 it seems that everyone around me is fake
 it feels like i'll never see the streets again
 right now my mind is my only friend
 and some of my kin
 sometimes i want to give up
 it feels like i'm at the end of my luck
 it's over
 i'm stuck
 what will my family do if i died
 sometimes i ask god why
 but i get no response from the man in the sky
 how will my family feel if i die
 if you knew how i felt inside
 trust me
 you would want to cry

-Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We trust your ability to express how you feel in lines of poetry that reveal the pain you feel as a consequence of the game's undying appeal to young men who think they can beat the street not knowing they're heading for inevitable defeat: jails, hospitals and death, swallow both the worst and the best, the weak and the strong, the hard and the soft, all get carried along to the ultimate shame of playing a game of sin that pays dividends to hook you in but just won't let you win — and you end up dead or in the pen'. Still, it's a way out, if you admit the truth that it's what you did where you've been that has you headed for the pen', 'cause you're still a young man with a lifetime to live after the time you have to give to the system. Use this time to learn your lesson, and build your character till you become a blessing not only to the family that awaits your release but to all who are able to read the words you plant in the page like so many seeds of hope and revision. Suicide is what you were playing out there. Now it's time to show your family, your God, yourself and the world that you care. Man, we know you can change lives, including your own, if you dare to try to live for the truth like you used to do for a lie. Change your contemplation from suicide to living the good life in your heart and your mind — then share the wisdom you hold inside; let it fly free (in the pages of The Beat).



My Game

i'm in this game for the glory
 you can count on me like robert horry
 i won't back down to anything
 it ain't over 'till the fat lady sings
 so i won't stop putting this ink to this sheet
 i'm still alive, i can hear my heart beat
 i control my destiny, i'm in the driver's seat
 and no matter what i'm going to eat
 you can join me, i'll give you the invite
 but my dreams right now are out of sight
 on the way i'll have to fight
 my money and goals are as high as a kite
 it ain't all about the fortune or fame
 it's 'bout not goin' insane,
 walking straight with no cane
 not throwing it away down the drain
 the game i play is fascinating
 there's always someone who's hating
 always those discriminating
 doing things incriminating
 but my game ain't about drugs and guns
 it's 'bout graduating, getting them college funds
 not working flipping burger buns
 getting legal paper, rocking air force ones
 going to college and getting a degree
 trying to make millions like jermaine dupree
 trying to not get incarcerated
 i'm gonna try my hardest even though i'm being hated

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Some haters hate you just for getting ahead, while others hate that you're doing it right instead. The first kind are simply sad-sack wannabe's, while the others will never understand what it takes to be free — so blinded by a little street fame, they never stop playing a losing game 'till they're locked down with penitentiary pain, hating anyone not equally insane. So pay no attention to haters when you see them, 'cause they're just obstacles on the high road to freedom.

Ticket Out

There are a lot of tickets to get out of the streets and away from negative violent living. Well, one is when someone from the 'hood goes to jail and gets out and tells you what happened and how it feels. That can be a ticket for you to stay out. And another is when you go to jail and it makes you think about it, and you don't wanna be here. That's another ticket to stay out and get out of the ghetto and violence mode.

But there is this one ticket goin' and flyin' around just floating in the streets why we brothas and sistas just let it pass us. The ticket is, you know, when a person your age is doin' what you doin' and gets shot and gets put in critical condition or any other brotha get shot that you know. That should be the biggest ticket you want for you to get out of the street.

It screams in everybody's face to move on up out of the violence. So I ain't tryna encourage you to stop da violence and increase the peace, I'm just sayin' when the first person in the 'hood got shot, that should've gave you the idea.

-Uce-B B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We keep reading that last line over and over because it says so much! We agree with you that wanting to live is enough of an incentive to make you want out. How will you get yourself "on up and out of the violence" that was already there "when that first person in the 'hood got shot"? Will you be making some specific changes in your life, or just hoping for the best?

It pains me to see young brothers
 killing each other over a set they
 claim, or 'cause a brother want to get
 out the game.

This Pain

It pains me to see my mom on crack coming home, then going back to that shhh. It kills me to see it. It pains me to see me and my lil' sis split up to foster home to foster home. Man, this shhh sucks. It pains me to see young brothers killing each other over a set they claim, or 'cause a brother want to get out the game. Can't blame nobody for trying to do right.

This shhh is a sham. It send me pain. It pains me to see how females hate from day to day, but they stay in your face. if you don't like me, then let me be 'cause I don't got time for no games. It pains me to see people selling their mother crack. You need to try to bring her back. It pains me to see all that.

-Lil' Sexy GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: All the things that pain you also pain us. But it also pains us to see someone as intelligent as you, and as aware of what is wrong with the world and the streets, coming to a place like this. What do you need to stay out of here? Is there anything The Beat can do to help? Is there anything you can do to help yourself?



It Pains Me To See . . .

It pains me to see my mom cry because her daughter's not at home.

It pains me to see myself getting destroyed by drugs and males.

It pains me to hear my dad beat me and his wife.

It pains me to hear my sister want to get away from my dad,

It pains me to hear my best friend wants me to do good and get off the streets.

It pains me to know my mom wants me back after everything I've done.

It pains me to know I'm in a messed up situation...
The system

It pains me to see people struggle for food or for their next hit of dope.

It pains me to see kids get take away from their parents.

It pains me to see myself in this place and not at home.

It pains me to see...

-Pooh, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: It pains us even to read about fathers that beat their daughters and their wives. This is a man who never learned what it means to be a man, so somewhere the cycle has to stop. We hope you'll be the one to say, "No more," so that you'll have less to be pained about.

Racism Just Keeps Going On

To be honest I really hate talking about the whole race thing for the simple fact that its been going on for so long. It's like when you look at people, you judge them off top. It's like all the Beats I read. Someone always sayin' ninja this ninja that, and like my potna say, we really don't know each other background.

That's why a lot of people look at me and assume I'm black because the way I talk and dress, and that makes me hot because I'm African-American and Rican and hella stuff. That's people judging people. And like my potna is Asian and El Salvadoran, but they say she Chinese. That's judging people.

I use the word ninja so much and that's bad because that's so hypercritical. But when I'm tryna go to school to become that nurse, people will start sayin', "She tryna be white." It's like, damn, stop judging people and don't use the word ninja if you don't know what that mean. Stay in school and learn your history.

-Lil' Zillah, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We wonder why it's so important to people to be able to label other people, as if the label tells us who they are. Even our governor is not above racial stereotypes. He has had to apologize for recently describing a Puerto Rican-African-American woman lawmaker as: "Black blood mixed with Latino blood equals hot."

Why Is Life Worth Living

I think life is worth living for a lot of reasons you should already know or you just dumb. But I could name a couple: one 'cause of yo' moms 'cause she brought you in this world. If it wasn't for her you wouldn't be here.

Live for yo' grandma if she still alive, your sisters and brother, your son or daughter if you have any. Live to go to school. You probably wanna live just to be with the homies, to smoke, drink, do hella shhh. But basically you just gotta live for yo'self if you wanna make it in life.

-Al Bundy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We love the exuberance of this piece, AB. We love the sentence that begins, "Live for yo' grandma..." That's a lot of good reasons to live. How will you be living "for yo'self" when you get out of here in a way that you weren't living for yourself before?

My Ticket Out

I think my ticket out of the violent life is staying at home with my son, getting my life together, getting back into school, and just basically having my mind set on positive things like staying out of trouble. And also my ticket to staying of the streets is me being the bigger person, not trying to be like someone I'm not. Walk down the right path. And every day tell myself to do something good.

-Poohdah GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There are two things in this list of positive goals that we hope you never forget. The first is school. It is so important to finish your high school education, because it's so hard to do anything without that. And the second is your son. You have a big responsibility now, which means it's time for you to sacrifice some of the things you like doing so that you can give your son the thing he needs most in the world — his mother!

From Smile To Frown

What up Beat? How's it goin? This Goofy still here in B5 Max unit chillin' like a villain time killin'.

Well, today I'ma write about this topic about what makes your smile turn into a frown. If you think about this subject, it's a pretty easy topic, right? You're chillin' watching a comedy show like Dave Chappelle, and the next man starts runnin' his mouth. Now all of a sudden you're mad.

OK, this could be my piece for this week, but me, I like thinking about things to write about. You want to know what makes my smile turn into a frown on a quickness? It's my family when my parents come visit me. Don't get me wrong. I love visits, but it gets to me 'cause my parents gotta come see me in a Juvenile Facility and go through so much shhh, like wasting gas, having to remember to bring your IDs, their permission slips, and going through metal detectors. What the hell is that shhh?

They're my parents. We went from seeing each other every day without wasting gas and needing permission slips to this. All 'cause of a stupid-ass decision I made. Of course I receive my parents with a hug and smile, but behind that smile there's always a frown 'cause it wouldn't have to be like this if it wasn't for that decision I made one night.

Well Beat, my time's up for today. Keep trucha, y al rato.

-Goofy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: As always, Goofy, this is a well-written, well thought-out piece, and, as always, we admire you for it. But we're not sure we agree that you're here for "a stupid-ass decision..." Decisions require thinking about things, weighing options and choosing. We don't think you did any of that when you led the cops on that nearly deadly chase. We don't think you were thinking at all. But that was then, and this is now. Thinking is the thing that distinguishes you as a writer now. So we can understand why you blame yourself for the pain you've put your parents through, as well as the frustrating obstacles the system puts in your way when they come in to see you. You're right about that... They didn't put you here, you did. But the fact that you see that, that it hurts you, that you want to make some amends for what you've done — those are the pieces of evidence we see that makes us think you are on a different path. You've always had brains (and you can thank your parents for that), but using those brains in ways that don't hurt others may be a more recent development, and one that we cheer you for!

It Pains Me To See . . .

All of the mothers in my community that have had to watch their children be put in coffins as a result to black on black crime. It pains me to see people of the same race sellin' drugs to each other and puttin' money over people. It hurts when I go to New York to visit my family and hear that my uncle is pimpin' my 12-year-old cousin and to see now family isn't even there for family anymore.

-MC, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: Yes, we can understand why these are painful things to see. Did you talk to your 12-year-old cousin about her father? What can you do to change this picture?

Sick And Tired Of Getting Into Trouble

Hi, my name is Leanna, and I've been getting in trouble my whole life and I'm just tired of it. So I'm going to change my life because I am 16 years old and I've been getting in trouble since I was 12, and I'm just sick and tired of it.

So now, since my mom has custody, I'm more grateful for it, because I get to do what I want to do. I just know I will do better now. I won't have to worry about running away because my mom don't belt me so I don't want to run away from her. But that is why I want to change my life so I don't hurt my mom no more because I love her so much and I have no reason to.

And I don't want my sister and brother to follow in my footsteps because they act out when I do bad things, and I don't want my mom to keep coming to juvie to visit her kids! So I'm going to do right this time because I'm getting too old to come here

-Phoebee GU, SF/YGC

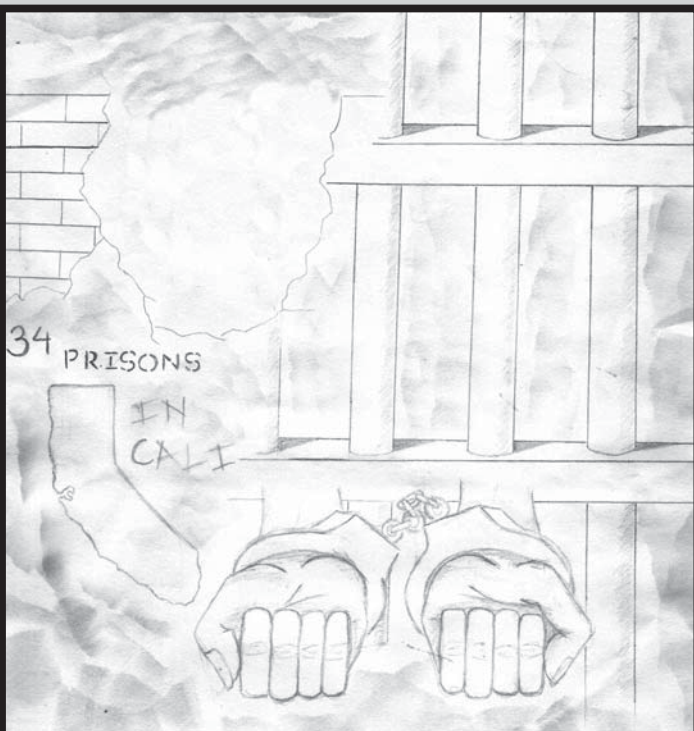
From The Beat: What are your plans when you get out, Phoebee? What will be your first step toward changing your life? We hope you go to school every day, because that is the basis for a better life. We also hope you remember that even though you love your mom, sometimes you won't always want to do what she says. So just remember what happens when you run, or when you do things you know you shouldn't do. We wish you all the luck in the world, and we know you can do it.

My Ticket Out

My ticket out is my new baby. I just found out I am six weeks pregnant, and I feel that now that I have a baby to take care of, I won't have to be on the block. I won't have to be on the track because I'll have someone to love, someone that depends on me. And if it don't have me it won't have nothing 'cause what will happen if some psycho gets me? Then my baby won't have it all like it deserves. So that's my ticket out. So if y'all got something to say, say it.

-Young Snow Biznes GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yeah, we've got something to say — Congratulations! You are going to be a mother soon! Your world will be changed forever, and if you follow through on what you know you have to do (and what you know you have to stop doing), then it will change for the better in a major way. Just remember, raising a child is not all peaches and cream. There will be times when you want to scream. So go ahead and scream, but be there for your child! We wish you all the luck in the world.



Visiting Memories

Visiting. I look forward to it every week. But every time after the visit, I don't look forward to going back to the daily routine. They staff are cool but if they have a bad day, then you'll have a bad day as well.

This place isn't tight or fun but it sure beats being on the streets getting more charges and getting more involved. Being in here probably saved me from doing something that'll get me years.

So I tell my grandma (mi abuelita) every visiting day that it's good that I'm in here. It gives me time to think about my nephew and my unborn niece. I don't want their memories of me to be that of visiting me in juvenile prison or getting drunk or abusing drugs. I want the memories to be of a caring uncle who would take time out of his day to listen, because maybe that will change their future. I never had anybody that I could really talk to. If I did, I wouldn't have ended up the way I did. All my time, if its taught me anything, is that no matter where you are you can use your time however you choose to — chill, watch TV, study, listen to the radio, read, sleep... It's how you want to spend it that determines how rehabilitated you choose to get. My inspiration is my future, my nephews, and most importantly my grandma. So, don't forget when they lock you up, they lock you up physically but not mentally.

-Allen, SEF/Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: You are right on! You can choose to make the most or the least out of any situation that you are in — including being locked up. Even when you are locked up, you have total control of yourself. You can choose to lose that control by not following rules and getting yourself into trouble or you can powerfully choose to take control and grow into a healthier person. I fully agree with you that when you are locked up, you physically lose your freedom, but you still have your mind and soul that you can allow to run free. For those of you that are sitting behind locked doors, take control of your mind and spirit and challenge yourself to emerge out of this situation a more powerful and intelligent person.

I Want To See My Daughter Grow Up

On August 11, I got on the phone and called my sister. She was cryin'. I asked her what was wrong. She said Monte and Ant go killed. It seem like everything stopped, even time. Then I started to cry. That shhh was too hard to believe.

When I got off the phone, I sat down and started to think about a lot of shhh, like how they were only like 17 or 18 years old. They life had just started. I was also thinking about how one of them had a child and she wasn't even a year old. He couldn't even see his daughter grow up.

I have a daughter too and I want to see her grow up and have kids. I feel no one should put themselves' in that position. I'm talkin' about all that beef shhh. I been there done that, and that shhh weak. If you read this and it apply to you, do learn the hard way. But I can' tell y'all what to do. I can just give y'all something to think about. So good luck to all y'all.

-Big Bill B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The path that takes us from childhood to adulthood is different in every case. Some "children" have learned enough of responsibility to be like adults. Some "adults" will never be anything but children. You have looked into your daughter's eyes and measured that look against the bitter experience of your homies' deaths at such a young age, and you have decided you don't want to cheat your daughter out of a father or cheat yourself out of a daughter. That simple understanding takes you out of the child's realm and into the realm of responsible adulthood. There is no harder work than being a father. (Anyone can make a baby, but only a responsible man can be a father.) To be the father you want to be, you will need to change much about your life. You will have to sacrifice many of the things you like doing. But as long as you remember that your daughter is now more important than all those things put together, you have already taken the first, and most important step, in a long journey called life. There are great riches ahead of you (the riches of family, of a daughter's love, of providing a decent model for the next generation), if you keep what you've learned in your head and not give in to the many temptations that will be coming your way.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Money's The Only Ticket

The ticket out for me is money, and it's not only the ticket, it's the reason why there's so many killings and robberies. And because we live in poverty, money is the answer to everyone's problems. For me, it's get money or get nothing. That's all I know. That's what I am stuck to.

I got to get it, even if it's in the worst way. I see that's my only ticket out. I ain't gon' stop till I get where I wanna be, and I feel I got a long way to go 'cause I know I ain't game tight, 'cause if I was, I wouldn't be in here.

-Marky-D B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We admire two things about this passionate piece: it is well-written, and it is honest. We also agree that poverty is the root problem that must be addressed, though that doesn't mean that money is the answer to all problems. Still, it is the answer to most problems, so then the question becomes how to make the money you need. If "getting it in the worst way" puts you behind bars, then shouldn't you at least think about other less risky ways to get it? Do you think every con in prison "ain't game tight" 'cause if they were, they wouldn't be in prison? We know some of those men, and we don't know how much more "game tight" they could have been. And even still, they're now living out their entire lives in small cages under the control of other men. It's something to think about.

Living Through A Bad Experience With Thanks

I hope to never read this Beat. My hope is by the time this Beat is published, I would be three weeks gone. If I have been released or not, I would like to say thanks to the counselors here in B5 that have made or still make my time easier. As well as some teachers who come here for more than a paycheck. And I especially want to thank my lawyer who has been doing a superb job on keeping me on the road to freedom.

As I have written in the past about what it's like to be locked up, and even more about how it feels, I will keep in the same spirit which has helped me through some rough time. This life or dark slow misery, a life lived in colorful tan:

Where games of wit are fought between prisoner and yard.

Where freedom's so close yet so far.

Where the night sky brings me no more happiness.

Where the mountains' fog reminds me of my passed life.

Where your emotions run wild and

Where every aspect of your life is in their complete control.

And where...

Thank you Beat Within for letting me express myself these last few months.

-Zoltan B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope this isn't the last time you read The Beat, Zoltan. (You can easily access us through our web page at www.thebeatwithin.org) It is not often that someone in the hall thanks those who helped him while here because the anger sometimes overwhelms feelings of gratitude. We admire you for remembering those people now, and all we can say is that your contributions have been consistently excellent. Thank you for taking The Beat seriously, and teaching through poetry. (You can also write us from wherever you happen to be. We'll publish you in the back of the magazine in The Beat Without.) We wish you all the luck in the world. Thank you.

Our Life

Throughout life you always gone have some side bustin' haters. Some people just be around certain people to feel like they the ninja or somebody that's hella important when they know they really ain't shhh...

It pains me to see that our society is damn-near based off of materialistic things that shouldn't be one of our main concerns in life. Gold teeth, jewels, hella expensive-ass clothes and hella other-ass shhh. We buy scrapers, put mo' money into it than what we bought it for and really don't get that big profit. You cannot fit in if you ain't got the best of at least presentable to our peers and everybody else that's caught up in the hype. Even how you really can't get the females without the meaningless materialistic thing she looks at you like you can't do nothin' for me, or if you got the right resume she gone use you for what you got in exchange for a lil' bit of explicit activity, know what I'm talkin' 'bout.

It pains me to know that the majority of our AA females have such exceeded limitations where you never have enough for her. It's always, "Give me, give me, give me..." Smile in your face but got somebody else on the side.

But what really painful to see is that us AA generation uses the N word so freely like it was born with us. That's a word we grew up through our parents, homies movies, CDs, etc. That word really is very derogative word to use to each other and to know the painful history that comes along with it. That's what pains me. I'm gone try to stop using that word for real....Holla back.

-Reese-C-Cup B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's not just your generation that is caught up with materialism. It like the whole country worships it! What made you question this value that you see all around you? What made you question the use of a word bound up in the history of the entire country in a way that makes you want to stop using it? It's because you're asking yourself questions about things that you used to take for granted that we know you are on a long journey of seeking and gaining knowledge. Now that it's begun, you'll never stop asking good questions. Holla back, ya'self...

Like A Bird

like a bird

i just want to enjoy my flight

through up's and down's

swooping through trees and over the seas

turn the right way

and finally leave my immoral thievery

like a bird

i just want to envision my journey

swooping through storms in a hurry

i'll land on top of a calm ocean

like a bird i want to teach

the clouds how to paint my picture

like a bird i just want to fly then hunt

that which has been not hunted before

and that is — life itself

— like a bird

-Lil Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your imagination already soars like a bird through the stormy clouds of life to alight in an ocean both calm and bright. Having the goal of living a better life by always choosing to do what's right is itself to embark on a hunting expedition. Like a bird, you'll need to keep a sharp eye on your surroundings and maintain your innate sense of direction. You must be equally at ease in an ocean of possibility, or having chosen any particular patch of earth, start putting in work with a right mind, however humble the task that binds.

... what really painful to see is that us AA generation uses the N word so freely like it was born with us.

This Pain, It Pains Me To See

It pains me to see that police are killing youngsters
To find a little baby in a dumpster
To see my friends die slowly while I'm in this place
Which is very painful. That is why I have this look on my
place.

Because I know I'll never see them again
Man they was my boys, they were my closest friends
And somebody took their life
Man that's not even right

My friend got killed by the police about three weeks ago
I still feel the pain inside, I can't let it go.

I couldn't even pay my last respects.
So when I get out I have to get it off my chest.

I'm really lucky that I'm in here.
Because I could have been one of those murders this year.
And parents are really having a hard time about this child
being killed

But what I wanna say to the parents
is that maybe your child was doing something wrong the
other night off a pill

Because it's not right to kill people
People should be able to walk down the street without
looking behind their backs wondering if someone's trying to
kill them or other people

It pains me to see young black people killing each other
over a spot that they don't even own.

So when the OG's get out of jail and back to the block and
put a gun to their dome

And then they say they wrong
Instead of going back to the OGs, they go to the youngsters
chillin' down the street and shoot them up, now that's
wrong

Seeing parents cry at their child's funerals, it's hard to see.
And that is pain for me to see.

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This should be required reading at the White House, at the Mayor's office, at the Governor's office, for all teachers. You are our hope for fighting this pain you know. What would happen if you grew up, freed your body and mind, raised your daughter, worked to save and nourish your community?

My Pains

It pains me to see my life pass me by.
It pains me to see the way the world looks at me.
It hurts me a lot.
It pains me the way the little boys and girls look up to
us
--and we knowing we ain't living right.
That's what pains me.

-Baby Lou, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You'd think that with all this pain in this little piece, we'd feel bad reading it. Instead, it had the opposite effect. The fact that these things pain you shows how big your heart is, and how much you care about your people. If you can feel for them, if you can feel for yourself, it means you can be moved, you can feel sympathy, and it means that deep down you are much, much, much more than what the "world" sees when it looks at you. Is there a way to use this pain to make changes, to begin living right?

This Pain

This pain it pains me to see a family cryin' over
My dead homey
This pain it pains me to see people all over the world
Starving
This pain it pains me to see a waste of life
Locked behind a key
This pain it pains me to see war, death, pain
Misery
This pain it pains me to see a broken home
No more family
This pain it pains me to see why we can't live
In harmony
This is that pain it pains me to see
That my life and everything can be
The one that makes a difference and stops
These pains it pains people to see
I just want everyone to live happy.

-Joseph, Durango, Maricopa County Arizona

From The Beat: We believe you can make a difference in the pain and suffering of the world. But you start by conquering your own demons first. No matter where you are, behind lock and key or footloose and free, you make a difference by making your own life matter. You do matter!

I've been getting mail about what happenin' in reality,
Folks bein' beatin' with physical an' mental brutality

I Shall And Will Prevail

It's always hard for me to be,
Myself to see you with no love for me,
My childhood dreams to achieve the goals I see,
It's hard out in da cold sellin' drugs to fiends
CITO livin' small but large doin' bad things,
Tryin' to redeem myself from all da bad dreams,
Cold beings in da world out to see you fail,
But CITO shall and will prevail,
I've been getting mail about what happenin' in reality,
Folks bein' beatin' with physical an' mental brutality,
Da fatalities that I've committed have come back to me
Taught me lessons that will never be forgotten,
But shall set me free,
Da mentalities that have gotten to me,
But CITO knows what's up.
Just let me out and I'ma be just me. Ya see.

-Ctio B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We believe you when you say the CITO who walks out of here won't be the same as the CITO who walked in. But we'd love to read a CITO poem that describes some of those mentalities that have gotten to you, and just which lessons you've learned that will set you free.

These Things Pain Me To See

It pains me to see a dead body on da block
It pains me to see blacks getting harassed by the cops
It pains me to see my mom struggle for a meal
It pains me to see that we barely payin' bills
It pains me to see a girl raped on TV
It pains me to see that my life ain't easy
It pains me to see that my life is in da drain
It pains me to see that life is not a game
It pains me to see that money won't stack
It pains me to see my close friend getting clapped

-Young Rek B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It pains us to see so many youngster boys and girls locked in the system. It pains us to see youngsters having to go through more than they should as a youngsters. It pains us to see young men and young women struggle and fall on the streets. It pains us to see parents and loved ones shedding tears for those that they've lost. But it does not pain us to see someone like you who sees the world he lives in for what it is, and who doesn't want to accept it as the only reality. You're right, Young Rek, your life is not easy, but you're wrong when you say it's "in da drain." Don't judge the entire moving picture by this one snapshot of your life. If you can't change the picture on the street, then focus on changing your own contribution to that picture. Prepare yourself (get your education) to move onto a new path which leaves this world behind you. Keep observing; keep thinking; and keep writing.

Can You See What I See?

What do you see when you look at me?
 I really wanna know what you see
 Do you see a girl who is locked up for robbery?
 Or do you see someone who can be anything she
 wants to be?
 When you look at me,
 Do you see beyond the purple and khaki?
 Can you look at me and tell that I'm unhappy?
 No.
 So how can you tell that I'm a bad person just by
 looking at me?
 When it's only the surface that you can see.
 You don't know that there is so much more to me
 You only know what you can see
 You may think that I'm a bad person
 Naw... that ain't me
 But of course, you'll never know that because you
 can't see what I see
 What you see, is only skin deep...

-April GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You want to know what we see? We see a little girl who has made a mistake and ended in a place where no one should be. We see the loneliness and the pain she feels inside through her words. We see that she can be someone or something great, with determination, hard work and a little luck. But you know what, April, we also see that purple and khaki, because that is also a part of who you are at this moment — but not at all who you are in some permanent way. We know it's hard for the outside world to see past the surface, and that's a great pity. But you must also be careful not to ignore that surface, because it also reveals a part of who you are — which is a human being who, like the rest of us, sometimes makes mistakes.

Doing It The Right Way

I'm going to go right about success. There are a lot of things I don't know but I want to know as much as possible. Last week in one of my "real talk" programs, she gave us each a name and told us do a report on that person. Well I didn't know how to get the information so I asked one of my teachers to get the information off of the Internet. They did and I just got finished reading about 60 pages.

It struck me at first that I had never heard of this lady's name but now I know a lot about her life and how she helped history for us black people. This lady's name was Angela Davis. I know where she was born and learned that her parents were teachers so they started teaching her at home at a young age. She went to a segregated school and lived in a town called Dynamite Hill. It was called that because the Ku Klux Klan was known for bombing their neighborhood to scare the blacks out.

She went through a struggle to get us equal. She went to college a lot. She was affiliated with the Black Panthers and was on the FBI's top ten list. She was accused of kidnapping, murder and breaking someone out of jail because the guns used were in her name. She was found innocent after 15 months on all counts. Now she's a teacher. Well I got to go. To be continued...

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow you did learn a lot about Angela Davis. We are amazed at how much information you remember about her. You know, it is the people who think they know it all who don't know much. Once you start to see just how much information that is out there, just waiting to jump into your brain, you realize we all have a lot to learn. You should be proud of yourself for taking this assignment so seriously and recognizing that being successful is about how much you put in, not how much you are looking to get back. There are some great models out there, past and present, who show us just what it means to be a fighter, to have courage and to stand up for what you believe no matter what the cost. Take a page from these people's books and not the ones who are just talking and living for the moment. Keep up the good work.

Thinking, And Asking "Why?"

The cell I sit in, sleep in, read books in, think on,
 why do I just sit in this cell?
 This food I eat, this food I don't choose to eat,
 sometimes good, sometimes bad,
 Why do I choose to eat food that I don't want to eat,
 Why not eat pizza, burritos, Chinese food, and everything I want
 to eat?
 But then again...
 Why do I come to this place, this cell?
 And do I stay in this cell,
 'cause my choices I made got me staying here?
 I learned something new last week —
 That in life there are no mistakes
 Just lessons that are repeated till they are learned
 Then again...
 Why do we keep coming back to this cell we don't choose to be
 in?

-Enano B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've done a wonderful job of describing what it's like to lose your freedom and ask yourself why. We'd love to read your thoughts on what the answers might be. It's clear that you've thought about it, so what have you come up with? (By the way, we know you didn't write this as a poem, but it sounded too poetic to us not to put it in lines...)

... in life there are no mistakes
 Just lessons that are repeated till they are learned

Breakin' It Down

Listen to da story that I'm about to tell
 It's about young bloods that be goin' to jail
 They started off young bucks just gettin' sales
 Now dey off wit' guns, man, they ready to kill
 But why? How did the world get this way?
 I don't know, man, CITO live dis way
 The way we livin', man, it's prices to pay
 I already know, man, I'm just tryin' to get paid
 Gettin' laid is just a part time job fa me
 The thangs I do it's always somethin' new to see
 All da nudity is just old news to me.
 Young CITO livin' da hard life, livin' truthfully
 But let me break dis down a lil' simply for you to understand
 the truth from me mentally
 I see the path that lies right before my eyes, but I cant deny
 what is meant fa me.
 I visually see the destiny for me. But only God can tell what's
 for me to be
 As I grew up it was hard wit' no food, watchin' my back every
 day wit' no clue
 I live in da ghetto, man, I don't go to school
 I gotta work every day to help my mom and my sis' too
 I wish I can get new shoes, not enough money, so I went out
 and robbed dude
 As you know, man, now I'm here in jail
 Writin' to da Beat 'cause you can't do nothin' but write and get
 mail
 That's all. CITO out. I gots to bail. Think and write your
 thoughts young males...
 And gals...

-Cito B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Since "only God can tell what's for" you to be, don't fall for the myth that the life you're living is your destiny. We agree that there are a lot of hazards in the water, but you are still the captain of your ship. God gave you the helm, so don't go down on the rocks. Keep your eyes on the prize, and remember the simple truth that if you hand your freedom over to a cold-hearted and indifferent system, then you are of no help at all to your mom and your sis, and yourself. The easiest thing that any of us can do in the short run is what is familiar to us, what we know best. But sometimes doing the harder thing today makes our tomorrow much easier. We know you know this, too, CITO, it's just that we don't want you to forget it.

A Glimmer Of...

I shed light on the darkness and only see more darkness
I look out of the window and see only what I am allowed to see
I walk through the endless halls and I feel the emptiness
I play ball with my friends but I am down on the court
I eat the food three times a day but I never really eat
I wake up in the morning but I'm still asleep
I lie down at night and close my eyes but sleep never comes until it's too late
I haven't been under a night sky for what seems like an eternity
I haven't walked free for what seems a life time
I haven't been me
I haven't been me
For too long now
I shed light on the darkness and I finally see a glimmer of...

-Zoltan B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: How well you express the drudgery of this place, the unreality of it, the bad movie quality. And we see more than a glimmer in you...

My Vibration

space between
the times seen
in the rays of light
that comes from no sun
but the clouds above
inside of each one
is more than the same storm of love
that dwells inside me
with more movement
than the moon could see
and i wish that i was that comet
that shot past that one star
that you loved so much

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem, Jacob, draws wonderful metaphors from a cloudy night sky illuminated by a hidden moon (perhaps). For sure, those last three lines are a poetic knock-out punch worthy of the greatest Chinese poets of antiquity. (They say the drunken Li Po, some say the greatest poet of millennia of Chinese lyricists, died trying to embrace the image of the full moon from a boat in a still lake. Your poem sounds more like Tu Fu, saner and no less great.)

Don't Play That

don't play that song please
because it makes my stomach turn
along with my mind
please don't play that song
the whole time it's on
it feels like torture
all because she loves this song
and i would still do anything for her

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Again, a poem of Chinese or Japanese simplicity, which simplicity of statement was discovered in Europe and America at the turn of the last century (esp., Ezra Pound's book of translations entitled, *Cathay*) and brought into the Western poetic tradition, producing gems like this one of yours in free verse (though William Carlos Williams called it "the variable American foot" with each line representing a rhythmic unit equal to a thought). Maybe you should find a copy of *A Hundred Poems from the Chinese*, translated by Kenneth Rexroth (twentieth-century California poet, influenced by Williams and Pound), if only to understand better how well you're doing what you're doing in your poems. Or, you could just keep writing!

Fixing Things

dreams that used to be dreams
unseen to the unseen
dreams that are unseen
are unseen to some dreaming
that dream all beautiful dreams
all beautiful dreams
are not all beautiful
to all the dreamers that dream these dreams
hopefully one day
i can help make all your dreams beautiful

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A beautiful dream that shatters at the dawn, and upon awakening is painfully gone, is no less beautiful as a delusive dream, but far less meaningful than those that seem to shadow forth a real life scheme by which beauty becomes an awakening, a real life goal there for the taking. But the latter dreams depend wholly on proper means of achievement, or they, too, eventually come to deluded bereavement.

What Makes My Smile Disappear

Was this time when on my Birthday and my friend was in a gang. This was heartbreaking because he was constantly in juvenile hall and the hospital. So as a birthday present I asked him to leave his gang because I was afraid of something bad happening to him. He was my best friend and all.

So my birthday came and I was happy and excited. I was wondering why he wasn't at my party. Next thing I know my other friend said, "Look, who got shot, y'all." It felt like my heart stopped as I saw his face on the news. I didn't smile for two weeks.

-Jeramiah B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're so sorry about your friend, Jeramiah, but you can't make people do anything they don't want to do. Change has to come from the inside. You were a good friend to ask him to give up the gang because you were worried about him. You were a better friend to him than he was to himself.

What we need to do is help each
other out and get over this but
the only problem is misery
loves company.

Misery Loves Company

My question is why is everyone trying to hold everyone that wants to progress back? If you go and better your knowledge you become a square. A hustla tries to step out the game and now his friends call him a sucka. Why is everybody hatin' on people that man up? What we need to do is help each other out and get over this but the only problem is misery loves company.

-Andrew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You got it Andrew - misery loves company. When so called friends try and keep the people they love from doing better by and for themselves, they are scared and selfish. Too often folks are quick to call out the people they secretly envy, the folks they wish they could be like but don't have the courage to. We agree that we should be helping one another out instead of holding each other down but we aren't there yet. In the meantime, just block those folks out and let them be miserable on their own time, not yours.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

I am

I am me
 I am the one that stands with the key,
 I am somebody,
 I am somebody who wants to be somebody,
 I am beautiful,
 I am the right key to the right tool,
 I am not a fool,
 I am ashamed of the people that want to be cruel,
 People selling their bodies is not cool,
 I am positive cause I want to live,
 I am all I have to give,
 Without my soul how can I live,
 I am resourceful,
 I am talented, also well balanced,
 I am well challenged
 I am way above,
 My sheer is as sweet as a dove,
 I am all love.
 What are you?

-Tabatha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We are loving you and your fabulous writing! We can feel your spirit coming through on this Tabatha. Don't stop writing and being positive about yourself. You deserve it!

Life's a Trip

life is like a journey
 and every lesson's worth learning
 every mistake that is made
 can be forgiven if you pray
 so be mindful of what you say
 because a man's word means everything
 i put that on everything
 i wish life had instructions for every day
 and when life seems hopeless, it comes a better day
 i wonder why i'm here
 living with doubt and fear
 that my eyes will never be able to clear
 i want to challenge my peers
 to change at least one thang
 and maybe it might relieve some pain
 life's worth living so when i die
 people gonna mourn my name
 it's like we new-age slaves
 locked in cages
 turning into animals, changing faces
 changing places from juvi to c-d-c
 being on the street hittin' some skins
 to beating my meat
 real life is raw so cherish every damn minute
 life is like a race that ain't neva gon' finish
 i wish i was the h-n-i-c [head ninja in charge]
 so all my family can be released from bars
 life's worth living because family matters
 even when you dead-broke and your life is shattered
 life's worth living, so let's live it

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: One thing about forgiveness is that you must seek it, and before you're willing to do that you must see that you need it. Now keeping one's word is essential, except when you foolishly give your word toward an evil intention. And everyone knows making money is a must, but how much you need to survive is sometimes a question of greed versus trust. Living humbly is not a lot of fun, but it's not a sin like robbing with a gun or pimping someone's else flesh so you can buy all the best. Well, that's how we see it. The only way to combat injustice from above, is to practice justice with intelligence, determination, compassion and love — or else you become just like the evil you oppose, plus you'll always be outnumbered and outgunned by the status quo.

Some Things

they say change
 i say it's suicide and murder
 all at the same time
 if a piece of you doesn't die
 then someone else does
 when i was six i was in love
 she didn't know
 when i was eight she asked
 she asked a question
 that left me in purple rain and snow
 she asked if i loved her
 i lied and said "no"
 when i was ten
 my best friend took her from me
 after she said she was mine
 without saying a word
 i threw a fit
 then she saw
 how much i loved her
 at the age of twelve
 we shared love without knowing
 i spilled my cup of six years felt
 she cried tears
 when my mouth was to her ear
 "i love you terry"
 six months later
 our talking stopped
 but i felt the same
 six months later
 she moved
 it was change
 no murder, no suicide
 but oh, how i wanted to

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you know this poem by Ezra Pound, translated from a Japanese translation of a Chinese poem by Li Po (whom Pound mistakenly ascribed to Rihaku, a Japanese name for Li Po), in a book Pound entitled Cathay (an antiquated English name for China). His title for the poem is wrong, and the last stanza (set of lines grouped together and set apart) actually begins the next poem in the Japanese manuscript he was using — nevertheless this one of the greatest and most influential poems ever to have been "written" by an American, as is:

The River Merchant's Wife: a Letter
 While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead
 I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.
 You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,
 You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.
 And we went on living in the village of Chokan:
 Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.
 At fourteen I married My Lord you.
 I never laughed, being bashful.
 Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.
 Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.
 At fifteen I stopped scowling,
 I desired my dust to be mingled with yours
 Forever and forever and forever.
 Why should I climb the look out?
 At sixteen you departed,
 You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of swirling eddies,
 And you have been gone five months.
 The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.
 You dragged your feet when you went out.
 By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,
 Too deep to clear them away!
 The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.
 The paired butterflies are already yellow with August
 Over the grass in the West garden;
 They hurt me. I grow older.

we shared love without knowing
 i spilled my cup of six years felt
 she cried tears
 when my mouth was to her ear
 "i love you terry"

In My Life

my life —
 i want to go back to school
 my life —
 is worth living
 because i want to finish school
 i have a job to go back to work
 and counting reasons, here's another
 i like to see my mom and sister and brother
 my brother and sister are both my role models
 i want to go back to school and finish my basketball
 in my life —
 i'd like to change my life
 and go back to school or to work
 in my life —
 i don't like coming to juvenile hall
 never again in my life

-Alfonzo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got the plan and place, and the reasons to pursue it and do it right. Now think through the temptations that could still mess it all up for you if you succumb to them like you used to do. What takes you back to trouble? Cutting school? Doing drugs and drinking alcohol? The folks you kick it with? Your gang, crew or team? It's time to change your playmates, playgrounds and playthings! You may ask: Do I have to? — You bet your life you do!

Roses are Red

Roses are Red
 Violets are blue
 Sugar is passion
 Just like you

My love and kindness
 is with you always
 But when I came to jail
 I called you to tell you

So the next day I called again
 To say I'm sorry for being so stupid
 So I asked you to forgive me
 You said no, I'm gon' to move on

So you're going to move on
 With my kid you're pregnant again
 So now you're a mad mother with two
 I'm gone for 3-4 years in CYA

So now you say your passion is gone
 Now I'm sitting behind these walls
 Crying all night so you won't leave me.

Now our roses are gone
 Our violets are dead
 Sugar is not more passion
 Just because I'm sleeping on County spreads.

-Sarillo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We love the way you mixed up the traditional old love poem, which must date back hundreds and hundreds of years, and your specific current day problems with your girl. Poetry is a river that flows through history, and we are all streams that flow into it... you have just added your stream to the river.

Get Yo' Smile On

What it do? This Derrick, one time I was with my girl Fanisha, we was leaving school, I was enjoying being with her and I got a call and told me my brother Mikal got hit. My Kool-Aid smile became a frown and sadness came about and took the happy moment.

-Derrick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Life throws some horrible things our way when we least expect it. We are sorry to hear about what happened to you brother. It's a reminder that every moment is a precious one, 'cause you never know...

My Life Is

Life is when you go through struggle.
 Mom's lil' boy on the corner tryin' to hustle.
 'Cause dad gone, not comin' back, and mom's not getting paid
 So baby boy on the block eatin', tryin' to get ahead.
 Also, when you go to sleep at night
 You might not see the next day.

Life with the Lord is different.
 Being able to be blessed with the breath of life,
 Able to live the life without looking over your shoulder.
 The gift of seeing, hearing and talking is a blessing of life.
 Being able to go to sleep at night
 Instead of going outside and thinking twice.
 Whether or not you goin' to die that night,
 Put your life in the Lord's hand.
 That's what I think life is.

-Young Chase, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have found peace in your spirituality and we think that is a beautiful thing. We all need faith, no matter where we get it from, so hold onto your beliefs and let them guide you through the painful times. Sometimes its easy to hold onto our faith but there are times when even the strongest of believers starts to question - when things don't get better faster or even worse, things just keep getting worse. You just have to keep believing.

"Minor Detained!"

What makes my smile disappear
 is fake people
 What makes my smile disappear
 is my enemies
 What makes my smile disappear
 is when my family is havin' problems
 What makes my smile disappear
 is when one of my potna's drop
 What makes my smile disappear
 is when my pockets touchin'
 what makes my smile disappear
 is when I have dreams of being at home
 and then I wake up and stare at a locked door
 What makes my smile disappear
 is when the judge says
 "Minor Detained!"

-B-Life, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have a way with words - we loved the way you set up all the different parts of your life that hurts... from stress on the outs to the pain of confinement. You also have that gift with words, instead of just settling for "being broke" you pick the more vivid "when my pockets touch"! That's talent - the artist in you turning your pain into poetry. Keep it up!

Family And School Put A Smile On My Face

What makes my smile disappear is being in here and away from my family and school. Me being in here makes me miss school, and school is one of the most important thing in my life other than my family. Without my family my smile will be gone forever. They are my life support.

My smile will also disappear when I got to court and they don't let me out to go to school so I can successfully make it in life and get a good job. But my smile is all in school and my family. Without that my smile will never be there.

-Orlando B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: With the love and support of family, and your own love of school, why did you allow yourself to come here? Why did you forget about the truly important things (the things that will determine your future) long enough to give the system the power it now has over your life? However you answer that question, we hope you give your full attention to what happens after this time out, so that you can finish your school and get on with making you and your family happy.

This Pain

G-vole? This home girl hasn't been up to nottin' lately. Man, my sis' (Baby D) court date is today and I've been thinking a lot and it hurts! It gives me pain to see my lil' sis in da hall and to see my man wit' another girl.

It gives me pain when I look back. Oh how I used to hurt my dad. It hurts me to know my kid don't know her mom yet. It pains me to see how I used to be and da way I used to be. It kills me to know that I hit da pope when I didn't want to.

It pains me to see my dad struggle. It pains me to see my lil' sis' suffer in a hellhole. It pains me to see me let drugs take over me. It pains me to see myself destroying mine and others' life. It pains me to see me lil' sis' hurting herself.

This homegirl is out 'cause it's jus' too much pain. Alrato

-Smokey, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: You've got a lot going on in your life, and it's putting a lot of stress on you. It's hard to see your lil' sis hurting herself, but she saw you hurting yourself, so it's one of the consequences you have to deal with. Why did you hurt your dad so much? How is he struggling now?

Living To Experience New Things

What keeps me goin' on in life is thinking about everything I haven't experienced yet, such as marriage, kids and really lovin' someone. But what really keeps me going on is proving my moms, dad and lil' bro' wrong. I know that they expect me not to succeed in life and don't think I'm gonna make somethin' of myself. So I'm livin' to see the day where I graduate from college and get to watch their faces in complete shock.

-Maya, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We would love for you to fulfill this dream, Maya, and no reason why you shouldn't. But we bet by the time you walk down the aisle to get your diploma, you will forget the anger and just enjoy the pride your entire family will be taking in you.

Living in Danger

Living in danger
Growing up as a thug
Participatin' in the crime procedures
You never know what's even coming to you
All them dirty tricks the devil use
Just to get you down
O' Lord, have mercy on my soul
I remember the day you spared my life
When I'm on the road
Late nights
When I stroll
Through the danger zone
I go without fear
'Cause you' the only one
Who really cares
Grown woman got shot in the head
Put on the life machine
It's all mean in society
I take a look on the kids
Down in the ghetto
Who suffer in hell
I show them love
They don't have to beg.

-Dean, Marin

From The Beat: You always have a good heart for the poor ghetto kids, and you often write about and to them in your tender, heart-breaking poems. From what you write, you sound like you've lived in the ghetto. How will you live when you have your freedom? We've known you so long now, Dean, that when they release you we'll miss you a lot, and your great raps you freestyle for our workshops. What are your plans now? Your dreams?

Make A Plan And Execute It

Sometimes when I think back on my life, I really wished I'd listen. Maybe I would be doing right. I don't know why I do the things I do. Maybe its for the attention that my father and mother never provide for me. Now they're trying like my life was never unhappy.

I hate the things I do, wish I can go back and change it all, but I can't, so I guess I got to learn from it and make a change so I can see a better day. It haunts me a lot though. Hurts so bad. Keep me locked up in my shell, sayin' forget the would 'cause nobody care.

But you sit and stare while my heart cries and my whole body wish it would just die. Got my family askin' why they don't know why I do the things I do. Only I can answer that, that's why I hold myself high with the urge to reach my every goal. But me, I need to get it together. Stop wastin' time before the streets catch up 'cause I don't want to another mess up....

Know your goal, make a plan, and pull the trigger....

-C-Littles, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: This is good advice, C-Littles. So what are your goals and your plan to achieve them? When you imagine your life five years from now, what do you see?

La Vida Es Bella

La vida es muy linda cuando de das cuenta que hay personas que te quieren y te necesitan. Hace mucho tiempo me sentia solo, tan solo que me queria morir. Agarre una 9 milímetros, la cargue, la puse en mi cabeza y recorde todo lo que había vivido con el dedo in el gatillo ya puntando a mi cabeza.

Pense realmente que si valia la pena morir. Tengo mi madre que me ama y mis hermanos menores. Que diran? Si hubiera hecho esto, le enseñara que por sentirse solos haran lo mismo.

Dios hablo a mi corazón y aqui estoy deseando nunca volverlo a hacer. Que Dios nos de sabiduria en la vida. Amen

La verdad es que en todo lados me siento bien y menos cuando estoy preso. Me encanta hacer amistad especialmente con las jainas lindas. Que Dios nos de sabiduria Amen.

From The Beat: Estubistes apunto de cometer el error más grande del mundo. Quitarse la vida es el pecado que tu Dios no permite. ¿Pensastes en el dolor que ibas a causarle a tu familia? Ahorita ellos estuvieran debastado con tu pérdida. Si tu Dios te hablo y te dio esa oportunidad de ver el error que ibas a cometer, fue por algún propósito. ¿Cual crees que sea ese propósito? Esperamos que esta experiencia te ayude a hacer las cosas bien. ¿Ahora que te has dado cuenta lo bello que es la vida, como piensas en vivirla?

Life Is Beautiful

Life is very nice when you realize that there are people that love you and need you. A long time ago, I felt lonely, so lonely that I wanted to die. I grabbed a 9 mm, I loaded it, I put it up to my head and I played back everything that I had lived through with my finger on the trigger aimed at my head.

I honestly thought whether or not dying was really worth it. I have my mother who loves me and my younger brothers. What would they say? If I would have done this, I would be showing them that people that feel lonely might do the same.

God spoke to my heart and here I am wishing to never do something like that again. May God give us wisdom in our lives. Amen. The truth is, I feel good all around and less when I am locked up. I love to make friends, especially with lovely females. May God give us wisdom. Amen.

-Franklin B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You were at the brink of committing the worst error in the world. Taking away your own life is a sin that your God does not permit. Did you think of the pain that you were going to cause your family? Right now, they would have been devastated with your loss. If your God spoke to you and gave you that opportunity to see the error that you were going to commit, it was for a purpose. What do you think that purpose could be? We hope that this experience helps you to do things right. Now that you have realized the beauty that is life, how do you plan on living it?

Pain

It pains me to see youngstas getting shot, killed, murdered.

Since I've been locked up, I've heard about all this shhh happening on the outs, all these things going down from Vallejo, San Francisco, Oakland, basically the Bay Area.

Damn, what the hell?

That shhh pains me, but what can I do about it? Shhh, I can't blame everybody. I get in trouble, too, but I wish everybody, not just teens, but adults, too, think before they act.

-Elmo, Marin

From The Beat: Of course you're right, Elmo, adults mess us just as often as teens do. What is going down now in the Bay Area that's causing all the killings of youth all over? Why is it getting worse? If you were on the outs now, what could/would you do to help stop the violence? When you're free again, how do you intend to stay out of any mess, so you can stay alive and free? Don't let the pain break you down... use that energy to build yourself into a better stronger person. You want things to change? It starts with you!

Ticket Out

I think ma ticket out of the game or away from negative violent living is ma boo! Yup, ma boo. It seems like she the only thing I love more than "the game," and she's the only thing I'll trade "the game" for. If I had to choose, I choose her in a quickness.

When I'm wit' her, the game don't matter, and she be helping me see that all the time, helping me see what's more important. And she'll never tell me anything wrong or anything that'll hurt me. So I put my trust in her, and the only time I do wrong is when I don't listen. And that's a whole lot!

So to ma boo out there, keep doin' what you doin' ma, 'cause you know yo' boy loves you!

-J-Boom B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We like this piece a lot, because it holds out the promise of change (and we always seek change). But at the same time, we can't understand how you can say you'd always choose your boo over the game, but also say that a whole lot of times you don't listen to her. What's that about? If you don't listen to her, then you're choosing the game over her (which is why you're here and she's there...) Anyway, we like the fact that you recognize just how important she is for your future, and how if you listen to what she has to tell you, your future will be much better than your past. Whenever you're tempted to do the things that bring you here, remember her and the pain you feel at not having her with you.

Hating Makes My Smile Disappear

Yo Beat, you know what makes my smile disappear? When folks hate my gears, da way I wear what I wear, sayin' my pants too low and my shirt too long.

And though they don't know da story, they hurry to say I'm wrong 'cause dese days it's hard bein' a young black dude going through hell in dese halls. Eating this nasty-ass food, dealin' wit' dese crude counselors dat stay on my line, tryna give a ninja time just to mess wit' my mind.

What makes my smile disappear? When I'm chillin' on da block just tryna put one in da air and I'm harassed by da cops. But these fools cannot stop me. Oh no, I'ma stay runnin' through dese streets like a pick through a fro.

-M Majic B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You write very well, Magic, and that's something that will benefit you throughout your life. At the same time, your commitment to keep running the streets because "these fools cannot stop me" is a prescription for more time (and more opportunity to write from behind walls). Don't you think that everyone who's doing long years (including some doing life and some on death row) also thought that they were unstoppable? Don't you think they, too, believed that they were too smart to get caught up? Do you think you are smarter than all of them, that the lessons they've learned the very hard way don't apply to you? Yes, it is hard for a young black male growing up in these mean streets, but we have first-hand knowledge of just how much harder it can be. Afro picks can be broken...

I Don't Want My Family To Cry, Die, Hurt

Why is life worth living? Me? My life is worth living for all my family. All my family I loved and I wouldn't want none of my family or people I love to die, cry, hurt, etc. My mom, she spent all these years to raise me and I'm going to end up not appreciating her-- that ain't fair.

Well... once I leave, I ain't coming back, because even though this juvenile hall ain't nothing compared to the real prison, I don't wanna be locked up anywhere like a dog, or being grown and still have people telling me what to do. Nah, my life is worth more than that.

-Dominique, Marin

From The Beat: It isn't fair to not appreciate your mom and get in trouble, especially if she tried her best to raise you and for you to be happy. From what you write, it doesn't sound like your mom tries to tell you what to do. When you're free again, can you help her out and show her you're grateful for all she's done to raise you by herself? When their kids mess up, some parents blame themselves, even though it's often not their fault. If you go to school, get part time work to help our mom out, it may also keep you out of any mess, so wouldn't that be all good?

Every Day, Every Night

I spend everyday in the pages of my books and everyday I pray for my companions.

At lockdown I take a nap.

At night I always hear footsteps.

And I whisper "I love you" at night.

My heart feels like it's in flames.

I would walk miles just to be by you.

It feels like there's a dictator in my life.

-Snoopy (Bertha), Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is a fine poem. It has the feel of truth about it. And we know what you mean about love. Sometimes love feels like a dictator. We feel compelled to behave in a certain way. We hope the dictator is benevolent.

Living To Experience New Things

What keeps me goin' on in life is thinking about everything I haven't experienced yet, such as marriage, kids and really lovin' someone. But what really keeps me going on is proving my moms, dad and lil' bro' wrong. I know that they expect me not to succeed in life and don't think I'm gonna make somethin' of myself. So I'm livin' to see the day where I graduate from college and get to watch their faces in complete shock.

-Maya, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We would love for you to fulfill this dream, Maya, and no reason why you shouldn't. But we bet by the time you walk down the aisle to get your diploma, you will forget the anger and just enjoy the pride your entire family will be taking in you.

School

School is where a huge number of kids join together for an education, and is taught by an instructor. Or some students simply get the information they need off of a computer, with no instructor.

Starting out in school was easy, like a fresh breeze against my cheeks. I was always smart and caught on quick. After the teacher taught the lesson once, I pretty much got it.

Friends were always fun too. Although friends were fun to laugh and converse with, I let them slow me down from completing my assignments. I always was willing to lend a friend a helping hand too.

As I grew older, my clothing became a big "must have right" too. My outfit had to be right, after the 10th grade, it had to match.

-Jasmine GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What happened Jasmine? What happened to that smart girl who caught on pretty quick in school? Why did she end up in jail? This is what we want to know. And then we want to know how she's going to use her brains to avoid the mistakes of the past...

Relax

I live my life the way I decide
If you're down to drive
I'm down to ride
Just keep it real with yourself
Inside your baby is comin'
Man, it's 'bout to arrive
Do what you gotta do
Be a man inside
This where we reside
It's gonna change in time
CITO is family, just believe in me,
I believe in you, you can do it B,
Time is getting late, don't wait fa fate
I see the date, it's just time to wait
Relax but stay ready,
You never know what's up, let's just make it baby.
I see the gate, freedom at last.
Don't let the past come get that ass.
It's easy, just be yourself,
CITO is here, Man, just in case you need some help.

-Cito B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We like the advice to wait, to let things happen, not to force the situation. We also like your offer of help. Whoever you are writing this sweet poem to we hope you can help — and can help you.

Demon Child

He cast me down to the barrels of hell 'cause he said I was a
demon child 'cause I caused a lot of hell
Look deep into my eyes, you see pain, anger, and vicious
People say I can envy and sometimes malicious
My past is filled with nothing but dark days
Demon eyes demon ways, a devil child what you say
The pinta is the only way for some
People like to gang bang but run when someone bust a gun
Grim, hardcore, black-'n'-brown is what you see
Latinos and blacks fill the cells and I'm half and half be
Porque chicano y negro is what I am
Cholos, locos and savs is my fam bam
The judge thinks that I am a menace
But to some it's only taking care of business
Listen to my flow
That I wrote
When I was mad in unit B-4
If you look into my eyes you see the pain up out the years
For me it's hard to cry sometimes I get uncontrollable tears
My familia consists of gang-bangers
OG's, young G's and dope slangers
Dark brown evil eyes some people say
But where I'm from you represent the 'hood and the Bay
HP to SD, Fillmo'e all the way to Mission Street
Chinatown, Lakeview all the way to the Avenues
T.L's, Sixth Street to Potrero Hill, Downtown
This the Golden Gate
Gold grills, old schools, paper chasers, and cell phones
Latino savage L-i-l' S-h-a-d-o-w. I spit the flame, she sees
the name, and your breezy leaving you
We money gettas
Can't hate on us 'cause so you got feel us
Thanks Beat until next week

-Lil' Shadow B4

From The Beat: We have to admire your poetic tribute to San Francisco (even though we had to take some of it out when it crossed the line into turf pride). But we worry about the pride you take in causing a lot of hell. Are you satisfied with the family tradition of gang bangers and dope slangers? (Where do those "uncontrollable tears" come from?) Are you going to be one of those you described where "the pinta is the only way"? That would be a tragedy. If the poem you wrote is a result of being "mad in B4," then we hope you are always able to turn your anger into such effective words on paper. Do you believe that the pen is mightier than the sword?

Ending My Own Slavery

CITO is the name, pimpin' is the game,
or is it, 'cause if it is, I'm the one to blame
about dis, I'm da one getting pimped it's nonsense,
slavery legal now for everyone,
back den only for blacks I thought it was over but they
was never done, they just begun, its crazy man,
I wish I can stop this slavery man,
but to hell with it, 'cause we don't have to here,
they said it in Omega, it was all clear,
you understood what was said so do not fear,
don't stay near the trouble, go out and pray,
we all know you're just in da way,
get out da Bay, it's all in your mind,
you were fed da wrong info
it's right about time, you gotta stop now
all it takes is one pow!
and your out for good now,
you got a choice so choose right, 'cause if not right,
someone else is gonna tell you when to sleep tonight.
So be right, be bright, it's gonna be all right
'cause CITO is hoppin' on da freedom train tonight.

-Cito B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're right, CITO, allowing yourself to be put here is a form of slavery, and it applies to anyone of any race who gets into the criminal justice system. After the Civil War, the Constitution abolished slavery "except as punishment for crime..." So the only way to keep yourself from becoming a slave is not to do crimes they can punish you for. Hoppin' on the freedom train is great, but staying on it is even greater.

What Makes Your Smile Disappear?

The experience I had that made my smile disappear was actually only four days ago. I woke up Thursday morning pretty juiced about going to see my old friend. About 20 minutes after I woke up, my boyfriend got a phone call from his cousin. He then started telling me about how her son got shot in the head once, and six times in the chest. I was really close to him so that made my smile go right away. It's still crazy to even think about him really being gone. And after I heard about that I went outside 'cause I was hella hurt and I broke the window out the dude's car who shot him.

-Seanie GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yeah, that definitely will take anyone's smile away. It's really sad to hear about all these stories of killings. But if you know who did the shooting, then the law will deal with him far more seriously than anything you can do. So even though we understand why you were feeling the way you were and did what you did, we hope you can see that you are the one who pays the price, not him.

Momma and Pops

I wish my parents knew how much I love 'em. On the outs, I never really spent time or told them how much I'm thankful to have them. I often yell at my parents or be mean to them, but now that I look back at it, I wonder why.

Why did I act towards them the way I did? I know that I truly love them and I was just a dumb little kid. Now that I'm locked up, I took the time to think about my parents and I regret ever disrespecting them. To my momma and pops, I'm sorry and I love you.

-Chi-Frank B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We think you answered your own "why" question when you said, "I was a dumb little kid." Actually, being a little kid and being dumb go hand-in-hand, so don't beat yourself up for acting like a child when you were a child. But it is clear you are no longer that dumb little kid. Instead you are becoming a responsible young man who sees the world through new, mature eyes, and that new view should mean a lot of changes in your future — changes for the better. We hope you show this very nice apology and love letter to your mom and dad. They will want to see it.

Times Are Gettin' Crazy

Was up Beat Within? Man, like Mac Dre said, "Times are gettin' crazy." What I don't understand is how someone could take lives so quick and easy. What happened to goin' from the shouldas, man?

Me myself personally, I wouldn't take a life for the same reasons these cats do. At a life and death situation, I'd blap fa self defense. But neva out of block business... Life is precious to me but shhh happens.

-Ethay B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: When young people are dying at the rate they are, that's more than just "shhh happens." That's a national disgrace that should shame the entire country. We are glad that you recognize how precious all life is, and that you're not down to take someone else's. What are you doing to take yourself as far from this funk as possible?

Life

Life is worth living to me 'cause I want to be something in life I want to be a successful person that can take care of his family and don't have to do crime to get money or make it in life, 'cause doing that you go end up in jail or dead and I don't want to either one of them. I love my life even though I am in jail and probably go be in here for a while. But when I get out I go change my life so I don't have to be in here again or dead.

-Dre B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's never too late for any of us to make changes in our lives. So we applaud you for wanting to make changes in yours — and for realizing that you can have the life you see for yourself if you act responsibly and exercise patience. Have you thought about the plan you want to follow to reach your dream? Will you finish school? Go on to college? Get a job? Tell us what you're thinking about.

My Ticket Out . . .

My ticket out is playing basketball. I play basketball very well. I think that's gone be my ticket out of the ghetto.

The reason why I said I think that's gone be my ticket out the ghetto is because I'm not promised to live another day. Anything could happen. It's a lot of people that have tickets out the ghetto, but nowadays we not living to see twenty-one, and that's cold. I have a lot of homies that didn't make it to see twenty-one.

-L B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Playing basketball can be your ticket, but only a very few of the most gifted players ever make into the NBA, so what's your backup? To play basketball in college (or even high school), you need to keep your grades up, so are you planning to finish your schooling? That's critical to any ticket out — and any ticket in to whatever you hope to do. It is a national disgrace that so many young people are dying in our streets. What are you doing in order not to become a statistic, like that long and tragically sad list of homies you wanted to remember in your RIPs (that we had to cut because we don't do lists of RIPs).

Education, My Ticket Out

My ticket out of the system is to go to school and try to get some knowledge while I still can. When I get my second chance out of here, I'ma get a job and try to stay positive and stop hangin' wit' the dudes I be hangin' wit' and keep to myself. I'ma stay off the streets. Ain't nothing in the streets for me. The streets don't feed me and clothe me so I shouldn't depend on them if they're not helping me.

-Donley B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We like this piece because you wrote more than one or two sentences about it. We also like your focus on school as a ticket out. Our experience is that getting a basic education is necessary for moving forward, whichever way you want to go.

Why Life Is Worth Livin'?

I think in life you supposed to make your children's — your creation's — life better dan yours, even though my dad didn't do dat for me. He grew up bein' white in a good neighborhood in da suburbs. Shhh, and let me an' my bra grow up in da jets! But dat ain't gone hold me down.

My life is worth livin' even dough I go when I go I'm supposed to be here. An' dat's because my loved ones s tell me dis. For instance, my wifey, Big Bra, Grandparents, Pops, Moms, extended family, an da homies. Dey is one of my reasons worth livin', I got all dem.

Also, I got somthin' to accomplish in my life. I got to give my kids betta dan what I had! Also I have to prove to da ones who think I can't change, I could! I can make somethin' of myself! Dat's also why I gots to live and need to do somethin' in my life where I can get what I want and what I need!

But for real, we all got somthin' to live for, be it money, or even ya lil' sibling, or maybe even just yaself. Dat's what ya got to live for.

-Whiteboy B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've listed a lot of good reasons to live, and we hope you think hard about how to accomplish these reasons. The fact that you have let yourself down by coming in here should be a wake-up call, because you can't accomplish any of your goals if you allow yourself to get locked up. So tell us, have you thought about your plan for when you get out of here? Have you thought about what you're going to change, what you're going to stop doing, so that you can do all that you want to do? We'd love to hear about those plans.

Why Is Life Worth Living?

Well, I feel like life is worth living for my two little bruhs because without them I wouldn't have that extra push in life. And to show my mom that I can be something and I will be something when I get older. And to show my family that I'm not going to be like the rest of my older brother and sister having kids at a young age and not finishing school and having nothing to fall back on in life.

It bring pain to me that I'm up in here for a stupid reason, and now I feel bad 'cause I'm trying to be a role model for my lil brothers and now I'm up in here By me being in here is a big wake up call for me to get back on the right line fast

-Rosanne GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Good for you, Roseanne, for figuring out that if you follow the dead-end path that your brother and sister took, you'll be facing the same dead-end consequences. Not everyone uses this time as a wake-up call, so the fact that you do tells us that you are awake and on a better path. Good luck! You have to chance to lead your little brothers by example towards a direction that will make you proud of them and proud of yourself.

How Can They Judge Me?

It pisses me off to see myself locked up stressing on what the judge say on my court date. It makes me angry to know that my life is in the hands of these people, that claim to know me, who I am, and what I would be like if I was to be released today. You know what them ninjas called me in court? They called me a animal with a criminal mind. What kind of people are they to judge me? If they knew where I came from, what it was like to learn how painfully hard it is to survive and get mine, then would they, could they judge me and call me out my name like those no good suckas did? Hell no! I know y'all at The Beat got some answers for me. Tell me something. I was 'bout to beat that prosecutors ass for real.

-Brandon B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There are some things we can say, Brandon. The first is that some of your righteous anger should be directed at yourself since you gave all those people power to hold you, describe you, label you, and "judge" you. They wrote the rules, and the rules give them power to judge you in the legal sense, in the sense that has consequences to your life. We can't answer the part about what gives people the right to call you names, as if that ever solved any problem. They do it to make you mad, to make you react the way you felt like reacting, so they can smile, point their finger at you, and say, "See!" We're glad you restrained yourself, because each time you do, each time you're able to exercise self control, you make yourself stronger and them weaker.

Day By Day Of My Life

Not a day goes by that I don't think of my family. Not a day goes by that I don't think of my friends. Not a day goes by that I don't think of my loved ones. Not a day goes by that I don't think of all the good things I did.

The good things I did was help my family. Not a day goes by that I don't regret the bad things I did. Not a day goes by that I don't miss being with my mom. Not a day goes by that I don't think about my future, and not a day goes by that I don't think of my kids.

-Big M B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're doing a lot of thinking. When you say that you regret the bad things that you did, does that mean that when you walk out of here you won't be repeating those mistakes of the past? We hope so, because we want you to be able to be with your mom and loved ones, and not just have to think about them every day.

Loving The World Around Me

Why my life is worth living, in my point of view, is for my daddy, and my older siblings. Pretty much family in general. On top of family it's my love for sports, music, having fun and seeing the world around me!

I've gone through a lot for a 17-year-old girl, more than anyone should go through, whether they're 17 or 71. The depressing life I've lived has made me double think about living life not another day, but I've had the people to love, and the things I love to do in my mind to help me keep going on.

I've done a lot of crap I'm not proud of, and people look down on me and be thinking they better then me because of it. But since then I've cleaned up my act quite a bit and I'm working to prove them all wrong! That's what keeps me going!

-Kira GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We think you've given a lot of fine reasons that give your live value — and reasons for going on with it. Family is a truly important value, and the fact that you have so many interests in the world tells us that you have a much brighter future ahead of you than dark past that behind you. We agree totally that no one should have to go through the kinds of things we know you've had to go through, but that just puts a bigger burden on you to not allow your past to determine your future. Cleaning up your act is a great place to start. Don't worry so much about "proving them wrong," and focus on proving yourself right!

Good Samaritans

One time I was walking down the street and I saw my friends, right. And then I saw my other friend. Then I went to the store and I saw my other friend. So then I told my other friends that I would see them later.

So me and my two friends was walking to the mall and all of a sudden this lady had a lot of money in her hand and she was with her husband. I saw her money fall because the wind blow so fast it was gone. So then me and my friends were close to the mall. Then we saw that money so we got it and we just decided to go home.

Then we saw the same lady, but she went in her house. So we got a envelope and then we taped it together. So we said that we would say the two boys you seen earlier had found your money. God will have your back. So that's all. We went home and that was it.

-Billy B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Is this story true? Did you and your friend find some money that a lady dropped, and you gave it back to her? We almost never read a story like this, so we'd like to know more. Did you give all the money back, or did you keep some for yourselves? What did the lady say when you gave it back? How did it make you feel to do the right thing?

changes

Misery loves company and it's tryna take me
Misery wants somebody and dat somebody is me
Well, I'ma tell it "Nah"; it ask me "When" and I said never
Misery loves company and they tryna take my ass forever

But I need to get away and find a better way
Temptations, frustrations, and accusations

I'ma get away from all of it and leave

I have set myself a whole set of goals dat I'm gonna achieve
I have better things to do, better things than you

Well, I gotta go back to my cell so alratos...

Shout out to all ma mijas and da firme vatos... late

-Li'l' P B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We'd be interested to know what those goals you've set for yourself to achieve are. And what's your plan for achieving them? Whatever they are, we hope they don't include the kind of activity that leads to lock up, because this is no place to pass your time.

What Makes Your Smile Disappear

What makes my smile disappear is when I got arrested. I thought I was the shhh until I got locked up. While I'm in here I have to watch my back almost every second when I'm not in my room. Some of the staff don't even act like they care. Like if you have a problem with someone or even a group of people and say you want to switch units or something to avoid conflict or problems. All you can do is request a unit switch. Nine times out of ten the unit switch won't happen. That is also something that makes my smile disappear.

-Cordero B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Did getting locked up remind you that there are traps for you to fall in all over the place, and that just being "smart" is not enough? As for getting transferred to a different unit to avoid beef, the real problem is that you can find beef on any unit, and in any neighborhood. You have to figure out a way to stay out of the beef on your own, because there won't be counselors around when you're out of here. But we like the fact that you are trying to avoid the funk. Keeping doing it!

This Pain It Pains Me To See

This pain that I feel and see is like two to three days ago. I had gotten a phone call and as I was talking on tha phone, my baby-momma told me that two of my homies had gotten killed, and I just started crying when I went up in my room. Like tha next day I didn't want to eat, I was just lookin' at tha floor for hella long, just feelin' hella pain 'cause I mean, I love my ninja.

But they young ninjas. Ant is 17 years old and Monty is 18, and I was hangin' wit' them every day. So for them to get killed, it was like, "Damn!" The whole time I was like, "Hell naw! They probably got shot, but they can't be dead!" And that's the pain that really hurt my heart. But thug in peace Ant an' Monte, gone but never forgotten.

-Young Jeff B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You describe the shock and pain of the loss of those you loved very well. The terrible reality about death is how permanent it is, how it can never be undone. We're sorry about your dead homies, as we are sorry with every issue of *The Beat* to read about young men losing their lives, only to be replaced by other young men losing theirs. Yes, it does pain us to see.

Only The Strong Can Survive

We will not change

Unless we survive.

But we will not

Survive unless we

Change

Don't be ignorant! Read this shhh!

-Lil Payasa, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: How very true! So, how are you changing in order to survive?

What I See In Life

I get out from jail
 All of the sudden
 It starts to hail
 Ninjas on the block
 Making me not want to walk
 Too many shhh is going on
 Dying
 Daddy, mommy crying
 Too much healing
 So much stealing
 Cars going dump peeling
 I got jumped
 I was hella pumped
 I say to myself
 It's karma, I'm hella dumb
 I want this shhh to stop
 Looking behind my shoulder for the cops
 Ninjas need to stop snitchin'
 All shhh is going to stop
 When I make the right choices
 And I will
 What I see in life

-Stony B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: When you make the right choices, then you won't have to worry about people snitching. No more ditching and cops won't be chasing. You won't have to worry about getting jumped, so no need to get pumped. Won't need to be on the block watchin' your back. Life will be a lot easier. So, just when do you plan to start making the right choices?

What Makes Your Smile Disappear?

Mayne, this summer when I was working and had just got paid about \$380 I was juiced. I was workin' at a camp and I got called into the office. They said, "Call yo' moms." Moms told me that my grandma just passed, and my smile just went into the air fast. So yeah, that's my story.

-J Man B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're sorry about your grandma. Hearing it that way, when you were feeling so good about the job you were doing, would wipe the smile off of anyone's face. How long did you work at the camp? What did you do there? Do you plan to get that job again when you get through this little mess?

Homies

Homies say they love you, but they really don't. They hug you, do everything for you when you out, but when you in jail, it's like they forget about you. They say they care, but they really don't. They really don't care. You would be on tha block wit' them, they would see tha police and throw tha gun or tha dope right in front of you, and you go ta jail. When you get out, they say, "Oh, ma bad," but they got you spendin' some of your life in jail for something you did not even do. They not yo' real homie. Holla at ya boy, Baby Purp.

-Baby Purp B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If your homies are willing to set you up and let you do their time, then you're right, Baby Purp, they aren't your true homies and never will be. But at the same time, when you're hanging on the streets with people with guns and dope, then you can't say you're in jail for something you didn't do because that's already reason enough for the system to take you in. So ultimately, the responsibility is yours (since the consequences are yours) for the choices you make — which includes who you hang with, where you chill, and what you do that you know you shouldn't.

It Hurts Me To See...

It hurts to see people cry for their lost loved ones
 It hurts to hear gunshots
 It hurts to hear screaming
 It hurts to be hungry
 It hurts to see loved ones smoking crack
 It hurts to sit in your cell because of a crime

-Crackhead GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: In these six lines, you have expressed a great deal about the streets, about the life — and about the consequences you take by the choices you make. If these things make you hurt, what makes you happy?

Dear Mama

The only thing that hurts me the most is watching my mom cry when she comes to visit me.

It hurts, 'cause I'm always here and I know I need to stop coming here.

This is the last chance the judge is going to give me, or else they're going to send me to placement.

I know I don't want to go to placement for the rest of my childhood years.

-Johnny, Marin

From The Beat: Have you ever considered not doing whatever it is that brings you into juvy over and over? What is so worth losing your freedom, education, friends, and worrying your mom? Do you need help to stop whatever you're doing on the outs? If so, get the help you need now? You have to speak up... people will listen.

To The Youngsters

What up wit' it Beat, this your boy Lil' Man Man coming up out of max unit.

I just want to tell you youngsters to go to school, and keep your head up. When you get out of The Hall, stay out and don't come back.

Show them that you can stay out and don't come back.

Show them that you can stay out and not get caught up in the streets, prove that you can stay out and go to school.

Stop robbing it out there. I know it's hard not to do it, because Moms or Dad or whoever you stayin' with is not getting you what you want, so you have to go out and rob people to get what you want. But robbing people got you in jail, and if you don't get caught up all of it going to come back on you and you going to come back in here for something worse. And then you going to be like, I shouldn't of did this, but it's too late to say that.

But do what you do, don't come back to The Hall, your family needs you out there. Stay up.

-Lil' Man Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is great advice, and we know that you learned it these lessons the hardest and most painful way possible. But we're going to turn it around on you. You may be looking at time, but your mind belongs to you, and you WILL get out one day. When you do, you can do the same thing you are advising the young people to do — prove to the world, and yourself, that you can stay out, that you can rise above all that you've been through, that you can turn your life around and be an inspiration to other young men facing years.... If you have that hope, you can make it, and then one day, you can be the person bringing the hope.

Life Is A Jewel

I feel that life is worth living for because there are many opportunities in life, for myself and other people. I feel that if you give up on life, you're throwing away a special jewel that means a lot and you didn't even know it. It takes a long time for a person to realize what they really have, and when they do, they wind up throwing it all away or giving up because they messed up and got locked up.

Now, you ask me why is life worth living for? It's worth living for because people love me, and my family misses me. And I know for a fact that there's a future for me instead of a life of crime.

Now, to me, life is like a diamond in the rough. I'm going to cherish it forever!

-Young C B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We wish more people treasured this gift of life as much as you. You could say that life is even more valuable than a diamond, because as rare as diamonds are, there is only ONE of each of us. How will you show your love of life when you get out of here that also cherishes your freedom?

Race

Black man kill a black man
It's cool, they lovin' it.
Black man kill a white man
They sentencing him to death.
White man kill a black man
They scream 'bout self defense,
Break it down to manslaughter wit' all of the evidence.
Eva since I been here,
It's been nothin' but sin.
I'm ready to get up out of here
And just to pursue my career.
So I'ma say this loud and clear,
Forget the white Ku Klux Klan
Talk mess but they don't wanna start shhh.
Ninja tooky ignorant 'specially my lil' generation
Treat ninjas wit' no hesitation
For any kinda lil' altercation.
Rappin' is my occupation but I will rule wit' that
And drop the top low low
So I could feel the wind blow.
Young black men -
Call the shots, my finger to all the cops.

-Young Chase, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a lot of anger and this is not the first piece that you have written about race but lets put things in perspective. Do we agree that there are certain people who have more power and privilege in this society because of the color of their skin? Absolutely. Having pride in oneself and their heritage is essential. Not letting other people's bs stop you from accomplishing your dreams is essential. But we often hear young people pointing the finger at the wrong person. The man can in fact be holding you down but the man has always been an oppressor so that is not a reason to fail, it is a reason to try even harder. Keep sharing your insights - we love to read your work. But what are you going to do to make your life better?

My Life is All Right Now

That's why you see this train up instead of down
I have a chance to prove myself that I will do right
And not be out all night with my boys tryin' to start a
fight
My friend left this place last month to go to camp
Now it's my turn to leave this place
So that I can have a great big smile and you will see the
look on my face
It felt like I was locked in a cage with so much rage
That's why I started to write poems from page to page
I get a chance to see my daughter now that I am going to
camp
People said that camp is a bad place,
I don't listen to what they say because I'm the people's
change
I just can't wait to see the look on my family face when I
walk in my house
They are going to be all over me like a mouse on cheese
It brings so much way to know that I'm leaving this
place to a better place right up the hill
So all I have to do is settle down and chill
And wait for them to come get me out of this hellhole
It's so cold in the rooms at night it feels like the artic
That's why I thank God every night for the chance to be
with my family and to love them and hold them tight.
Can't wait to see my daughter and my beautiful future
wife
That's when I can enjoy the rest of my life.

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: After months of reading your anguished love poems and songs of regret, it's pretty excellent to suddenly see hope and joy dancing between the lines of your work. You're off to camp now, and we'll get to see how it feels up there. Good luck, and we'll be watching for you in The Beat!

Too Much At Stake, Doing My Program

What up Beat? I'm bout to go to a group home. I'm goin' to pimp this stuff. Anyway when I get out I'm going to school 'cause I don't want to go to the pen. I want to live a normal life 'cause this is not normal what we are doing out here, killing each other over nothin'. Since my ninja Ron Ron died, I see life differently. I don't want to die for shhh. If I die, I want it to be for something right.

-Turk, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know that Ron Ron's death had a big impact on you - the piece you wrote about his passing told anyone who read it how much he meant to you and how painful it was to lose him. It's hard because we never want to lose the people we love and we hate to think that anything good come out of that kind of loss but it sounds like this could be a real turning point for you. Don't give up and don't forget.

It's Pain

It pains me to see myself in da mirror bein' in da same
place, same clothes every day.
It pains me to see that my friends are out but I'm not,
It pains me to see that my freedom was gone hella quick.
It pain me to see that I'm in pain inside...
But life is still worth living 'cause there's stuff out there
for me to be. I see myself doing good, out, and free. The
time will come. The way I live, I go through pain, sorrow,
happiness and joy. But right now CITO feels all.
Let me free and I'ma just be me.

-Cito B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: In a way, life for all of us is just as you've described it - "pain, sorrow, happiness and joy." Good for you for acknowledging all those emotions as describing your life.

A Little About Me

The first thing I remember all I did was argue in class.
When I was in third grade I was a wild little kid, getting into a lot of fights, copying off kids papers, shhh like that, and when I got to fifth I started getting suspended for yelling at the teacher or hitting a student for looking at me wrong.
That was the bad thing about me, I have short fuse and a really bad temper. As I grew older I started to get into gang fights for hanging with the wrong crowd. From there I started robbing people for money, started doing drugs until I was at a point where I joined a gang and that's when it really started getting hard. I started going in and out of jail.
To be honest the cause of all this probably was because I did not have a family to guide me. People I really cared about was coming and going out of my life like it was a game.
For starters, I hate my father for what he did. He has never been there for me. I have never met my father, and I hurts me because I've heard that he has some apartments in Oakland and he don't even bother to see if I exist. To tell you the truth. As for my mother she did what she could to raise a man as a single mother until she passed away. In memory of Anna Ramirez.

-Joseph, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know what great advantage you have over many young men in your position? You have spent time thinking about how you got to the point you are today. It shows in this story, that reads like suspense. Each time we get to the end of the paragraph, we find ourselves wanting to know more about what happened next. You start off by telling us all about how you were "trouble" and then you end up starting to give up some insights about where that trouble might have come from. So now, reread your own wise words. When you look at this piece, do you feel like you have any ideas for what you could do make things different when you get out? What advice - as a reader - would you give to the person who wrote this?

Damn! Still In The Halls

Up in a cell
 Going crazy as hell
 Up in the halls
 Surrounded by white walls
 Walking on concrete floor
 Locked behind a wooden door
 Wake up at seven
 Go to sleep at eleven
 Right now writing in The Beat
 In about four hours 'bout to go to sleep
 I go back to my room to read The Beat Within
 Till lights go out fo' I can get my sleepin'
 Wake up in the morning, be like, "Damn! I'm still in the halls"
 In the nighttime get my ten-minute phone call
 This is young Enano, got to wrap it up
 Till next week so stay up

-Enano B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope The Beat is part what keeps you from going crazy when you're caged and doing the same routine from day to day. But in the end, Enano, you have to face an even bigger cage — the one you'll face when you walk out of here, the one that gives you some freedom of choice, where any choice you make comes with definite consequences. We hope you are able to think about all this without letting it drive you crazy. It's in your interest to stay sane, and think about your future.

My little sister says she misses me every day I'm not home.

Living For My Family

Life is worth living because I have my family that cares for me and wants me to do good.

They want me to go to college but first they want me to graduate High School, because they want to see me do something with my life. They don't want to see me working at McDonald's or Burger King or any kind of fast food restaurant. They want to see me be a doctor, lawyer or anything I put my mind to. Being in Juvenile Hall is one place my family doesn't want to see me.

Now that I've been to Juvenile Hall I don't ever want to be back here ever again. Because now that I've been here I hate letting my family down, because I know that I do not belong here, because I am better than this place.

When I get out of here I never wanna come back because my mom and dad is not happy I'm in here. My little sister says she misses me every day I'm not home. And it hurts me that I can't be there with her, helping her with anything she needs help on. My brothers hates that I'm in here because they're used to seeing me at home with everybody and I know that it hurts them that I'm not home. Every morning when I wake up I'm not there, every night when I'm not there I'm gonna be there when they go to sleep. And I regret everything that I have done in the past.

Now I wish I was home. Being in Juvenile Hall is not a way of living and it is not a place you want to be. Because you will miss your family so much that it starts to hurt you and it is not a nice feeling when you're hurt and your family is hurt. I hate being here because I want to see my family happy.

-Pedro, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got the best asset in the world... the love of your family. They need you and have your back, and you need them and have their backs. This is a good thing, it's the blessing of loved ones. Please keep us posted and know that we wish you the very best.

Love and Hope

Why did I stop saying I'm going to kill myself?

Because I seen that my gramma really loved me and I have a nephew now and I hope to live for love and hope, so I will never say I want to kill myself.

Hey we're gettin' somewhere!

-Lil' Miami The King, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes, we are! Getting' somewhere that is. If you know you have love and you remember to have hope, you can get through anything. Thanks for stepping up and reminding us all of this.

The People I Love

My best role models are my parents because they always had my back through thick and thin. I'm not saying I'm perfect but I love them with all my heart.

To my older brother, who's in the National Guard in San Francisco cause of the airplane that blew up weeks ago, stay up and one love bra.

To my homies - may you rest in peace.

When you read this, hope to God I will be released on probation to start a fresh start.

I love The Beat. Late.

-Purple, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We definitely don't have to tell you how lucky you are to have such a loving and supportive family. Even though they no doubt already know how much they mean to you, it never hurts to remind people so next chance you have tell 'em how you feel. Even if you are reading these words in the halls, your time will come. Be ready to work hard.

RIP Cell!

Ain't nothing' gonna change.

It's gonna always be RIP Cell 'till the day our caskets drop!

It's something on my mind everyday.

My bra is gone, never to walk on earth again.

No more heartbeat, no more shakin' his dreads, no more showin' his grill, no more paintin' the town and again I ask why? Why did he have to die? Why do we have to go through this grief?

Was it meant for him to die? What was he thinking when he was dying? We miss you bra and I hope and pray you restin' in peace.

Damn, Marcellus is six feet, no getting' back.

I know he's lookin' over us where ever he is but I wish I could go back to that night

I just want to be there with him.

I wish I could push him to the ground when they started bustin'.

I wish I could have took him to the hospital.

So many things I wanna do but it's too late.

Why did I have to be at camp?

Why did I have to be in the hall for them two months?

Why couldn't I be with him instead?

So many questions never enough answers

but I know I'll see you in heaven.

Damn bra this shhh ain't cool.

I can't believe you're really gone.

That night wasn't meant to happen, bra,

where am I gonna be five years from now?

Love and miss you hella bra.

RIP Cell aka Marcellus Haley sun rise 6-19-87 sunset 2-16-06.

-Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What questions! Keep 'em coming and maybe you'll come up with some answers. Maybe somewhere in the mystery and tragedy of Marcellus' death are some answers to questions about your life, today and five years from now.

My Ninja's Dead

Forget how y'all feel about it. But ef the world. I could care less about life and this time I got on my head my ninja's dead and ain't nothin' I could do about that but pray for the' family's.

I got too many dead homies to count on hand and feet. So I just think about them and say to myself, is "my ninja's dead." I seen it at dinner time on the evening news.

-Fed Up, 150 Crew

From The Beat: All we can say here is that you are a strong person for sitting down and trying to write this down on paper, while what you must have felt like doing is just slamming your fists against the wall - or a face. Instead you put the rage down where it couldn't hurt anyone, and who knows - might even help someone, help another person reading The Beat who has just lost someone they loved and feels trapped and angry. We took out parts of this, as you can see, because we can't let this publication be a place for wild threats - it might feel like disrespect, but it's actually because we do respect you, and your right to freedom, and your right to a life of peace, where this cycle of violence and vengeance gets stopped. You are right, you have too many dead homies. THERE ARE TOO MANY DEAD. Take that rage, and your loss, and let's channel it into making a positive change.

Thanking My Mom For Helping Me With My Son

Man. I got a baby now. He's only six weeks old and all I care about is him. He brings joy to my life but at the same time takes all my money.

Now that I'm in here I can't do nothing for him. And the only person who is helping me right now is my mama. She is right behind me on this, that's why my mom is that best thing that has happened to me. If she wasn't there for me I don't know where I would be today. I know that I have grown up a little bit; I see how it is in the real world. I get it now mom, so hear me out, that I just want you to know I love you very much and I am sorry for all the shhh that I put you through. I love you mom! I love you mom.

-Bobby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Isn't it amazing how we all have to learn things the hard way. Mom's advice just doesn't sink in until we've made the mistakes ourselves. Well, now that you know, you can move forward with a positive life. Good luck with getting out of the system and back on the good foot!

In Trouble

What did I do to get in trouble? Hanging around the wrong people. I am not a bad person. I like doing good things, not bad. But in this program, I am messing up.

I think I just need a little help with my anger, 'cause that is what is getting me in trouble. I try to keep the thing in, but they push my button! I think I can do it though. I just need someone to talk to about all of these problems I am going through.

It is hard for me in Camp. I did not stay in jail this long. I had stole before I got in trouble this last time for stealing. I had did it before, but I didn't do it no more. I did not rob no one to get in here, but that is what I get for hanging around the wrong people that get in trouble a lot!

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You got that last part one hundred per cent correct! You've learned a lesson that many never learn, no matter how smart they think they are! Even after you've given up criminal activity yourself, if you keep hanging around those who still do it - you are very likely to get in trouble with the law, just the same as if you were still doing it yourself. We're not saying it's fair, but as you have learned, it's just the way it is. Still, if you stop hanging around with troublemakers, you'll find the benefits are much greater than just not doing time. Your life gets better. As for your temper. It's on you to learn how to walk away or ignore or whatever it takes not to flash on some fool for bumping his gums or trying to mess with you. It's hard, but keep practicing. Every time you do right, congratulate yourself. And learn from the times you mess up: think about what you could have done differently - then next time, do it that way.

Us Against The World

So many questions, not enough answers
as we walk in this hall

I ask why is it so hard for us to get money
without breaking the law?

Why do we choose to continue to destruct our body?

Why do we have to always watch our back?

Why can't we walk to the store without being thumped up?

Why do we have to walk around with a RIP Cell hoodie on?

Is this the chapter God chose us to live?

Is this all just a set up?

Are we gonna have a change of life?

Is this our fate?

Is this a game of chess?

Is someone gonna shout "Checkmate" game over?

I wonder is this some kind of test?

Must we have to post on the corner with a bundle of coke?

Is that the only hope?

Stealing dope?

Is this how we see it.

When is it going to be our time to shine the legit way?

Why do we always go knocking in at the devil's door,
but refuse to go visit God?

For all you haters I pray for you,

I pray that the elevator takes you up and not down

I love my squad and I know they feel the same.

I love you ninjas to death.

Knock this time out so we can get out and eat.

Believe it or not, school is our meal ticket.

Again I ask why?

Why did we have to walk down this path?

Why did we have to visit the county's house for juveniles.

So many questions not enough answers.

Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Keep flowin'! Your rhymes, your ideas, are knitting together. You are taking what you've learned from these months in the hall, losing your best friend, missing out on precious freedom, thinking of your boys as you re-think your life. We won't know in this lifetime why things are the way they are. But we can know that it's on us as individuals to make life better for ourselves - even if it's society/the system/the police that make us feel powerless. So, fools who are waiting around for someone to save us are gonna be disappointed. Before we go, we know you love your crew and all, but do not wait for them to see the light, especially if you are beginning to see things clearer. Seriously!

Unhappy New Year: Part 1

When my mom died, things was stressful for me.

But when my mom died, I didn't believe it.

I was in school in Stockton when my mom died. Now I'ma tell a story about what happened to my life and my family:

On April 16, 2005, on a Cambodian New Year, my momma passed away.

I was in school when it happened. When school was over I went to my auntie's house and I was waiting for her to get out of school. When I was waiting for my sister, my auntie came and asked me if I knew that my mom was dead. I didn't believe what she said. So when I called my dad he asked me to go home immediately. When I was walking home I was thinking to myself this can't happen. She died of kidney failure.

(to be continued)

-Ronnie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We are looking forward to reading more of this story...and learning how you coped with the shock of losing your mom. This sounds like the kind of tragedy that will shape your life forever, perhaps by teaching you more about life at an early age. Thanks again for believing in yourself enough to tell such heartbreaking story.

Pain To Be Homeless

It pains me to see people out on the street and they can't afford anything. They sleep in spots like the parks, sidewalks, under the highway, and the streets. People should give them a place to live so they can eat and sleep.

-Jose, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Some people aren't as fortunate as others. Remember, when times get rough, there is always someone out there that has it worse than you do. Is there something you can do to help people? What about yourself? What could you do to better your life from this life of incarceration?

Don't Do It

What's up, Beat? What it do? Man, I'm up here at Camp Sweeney. It's a cool program. I was go' run at first, but I decided I ain't go' run from my problems — I'm go' solve them. You feel me?

To all y'all out there that's in a placement that's go' run: It ain't worth it! All you go' do is end up back in the Hall going to another placement — or worse, going to CYA! So don't do it, 'cause y'all got somebody at home that want you to do a good program and want you to come home soon.

So don't learn from the hard way. Take it the easy! Be safe. Keep y'all head up.

-D-Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That head on your shoulders ain't just to show off your smile, 'cause you did some thinking here that is hella worth while. Why run from problems when every time you run you add one more than you had to deal with before? And, truth to tell, we've seen too many go to the Y, having picked up no new charge but just for running too many times. The judge finally decides to put you somewhere you can't run from. So, yeah, running seems like fun, but it's straight-up dumb. And since you've figured that out, you're one of the lucky ones. Take it easy and take the prize, 'cause it's better living without a warrant on the outside.

Sasquatch Life

What's up wit' it, Beat? What's crackin'? This is Sasquatch, from Hayward. Well, how I always start my writings: I want to give my utmost respect to all.

Now down to business — well, my life is worth living 'cause life was given to you and you should live it! Life is also worth living because you have people in this world that care about you. Sometimes life takes you through things you don't want to go through, but life is still worth living.

Also, the system thinks most of us are going to die on the streets, but I want to show the system that they're wrong! I try to live my life to the fullest 'cause life is short. I may not live my life so good, but it's still worth living. I have like two role models in my life who showed me how life is.

My life is also worth living because of my familia, 'cause my familia love me. And I have others who love me. Well, that's all I got to say. 'Till next time.

-Sasquatch, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can always count on you for straight talk. Whether it's what we want to hear or not, you tell the truth as you see it. That's a good thing. Really, the best place to start anything is from the truth as you see it, 'cause what else will stick anyway? It's your heart and your mind that will guide your life, no matter what. We, too, want to prove the system wrong! We, too, want to see you live a long and prosperous life. Why live as if life were short? This editor, when he was young, once believed, "Don't trust anyone over thirty." Now he's fifty-seven, and he's earned the trust of his children over a lifetime. He believed that, partially, because he never thought he'd live past thirty anyway. Life is long, and to live life to the fullest, you need to know that! For your future children's sake and for you own, stop living like there's no tomorrow and start living life to the fullest!

In My Head

there's a lot of things going on in my head
most of them make me pissed or sad
so you kinda say that i'm messed up right now
like my lil' bro' trying to be like me
and i don't know who to get in his head
that it's the wrong path to go
not only that, you know that one of my best friends
trying to tell me that i'm changing
because of a female
but lil' does she know that i'm changing for my lil' bro'
but anyways like i was saying
in the state of mind i'm in it's not good
but i'm trying not to lose my head
'till next time it's your crazy uncle saying peace out
oh one more thing
whatever choice you make in life
make sure that it's the right one in life

-Fairlas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Forget your best friend coming at you like that! You're just making him nervous 'cause he knows he needs to change for his family, loved ones and himself — but he doesn't even want to think about it. So he tries to make you feel weak or something when he's the one who's being weak, hiding behind that easy put-down talk, attacking your manhood, which is pure bull, even if it were true that your love for a woman might be motivating you to change. For sure your love for your little brother is, and you can't get into his head in a day or a week — maybe in a year, if you can show him all year long how you've changed. For a year, day by day, each day, show him; and we guarantee you will have gotten into his head about the right path. (Still, the only person you have absolute power over, is you.)

They Say Money Rule

if money ruled the world then tell me what hell life's worth
everyday is a struggle recouping on bundles to bubble
seeing my homies leave at a young age is trauma
no more drama, i wish this was all just a dream
me and my team making a meal without a record deal
you don't know me, how can you say you know how i feel
it's rappers out talking 'bout steel and ain't even for real
taking penitentiary chances, coming up shorter than midgets
sexing on pigeons same day they gave 'em the digits
and wonder why the dick can't stop and won't stop itching
hoes is missing 'cause they' parents didn't play the position
i'm a play mine and sit under the sun 'till i shine
'cause i'm a diamond in the rough, accumulating funds
now i gotta pay my dues 'cause i was living on the run
ain't shhh fun being locked in a cell alone
my girl writing me letters saying she wish i was home
but karma's a bee, she steadily make me feel the heat
even when i was on the street without a meal to eat
took it like a man, remain with my back on the wall
closed in between these walls praying to god
that i don't go crazy thinking 'bout my unborn baby
'cause life is shady, they need metal cuffs to tame me
i'm a beast rampaging through this life i lead
before i leave, the world gon' remember me

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Living like a beast rampaging through the streets, may sound good on a gangsta-rap CD, but it remains the entire reason you're no longer living free. You've got to outgrow this street mythology, that promises an eternal place in the memory of the 'hood for living a life that did no one no good — 'cause it's nothing but a fantasy that feeds on the flesh and blood real ninjas in the streets! We're surprised you haven't seen through it yet, but it's 'cause you have a visionary heart at your best — still stuck in a vision that needs to be laid to rest before you become just another felon hard-pressed to make canteen money. We're not trying to be funny. The world is not all about money unless you surrender heart, mind, soul and humanity to a vision built around money that feeds your vanity. Yeah, everybody needs money to survive, but it's nothing but death when it becomes your way of life — death, hate, exploitation, "abomination of desolation" (as it says in the Bible). It's time to wake up and see, when that's how you feel, it's the bitter harvest of a man reduced to a beast 'cause he fell prey to a mental disease aka greed satisfied by any means. Money, it's true, greases the wheel, but love of one another in this world's the real deal. Until your vision's adjusted, your fate remains sealed.

A Memory Now

I saw your bike at your grandma's house when I went by there. We used to go dumb ridin' down them hills. Man, your hill was the longest hill over there except for that one big ass hill.

Damn bra, you're really six feet. And I still don't know what happened that night, but I know you will let me know one day but I know you're up there with your favorite uncle, who was my dad's best friend.

2000 is when Jamile got killed by the police and when my grandma told my daddy he called your grandma to see if it was true and that's when I heard my dad cry for the first time. He had to have a funeral that was a closed casket 'cause his face was so badly beaten. Rest in peace Jamile.

My dad grew up with all your uncles and aunts and man you didn't know my dad named me after Jamile (my middle name).

My grandma told me they used to do hella shhh. They once fought two dogs in my living room. It was blood on the walls and hella shhh and my grandma just pulled up from work.

I can't get over it bra, but I know you in a better place, but I wish I could have been with you for those last two months. I was locked up. I love Cell. We all do. You was one of them finest. I'll meet you at the crossroads Marcellus. I still remember the song played at your funeral. (Fly like a bird, take to the sky, I need your love to carry me higher)

Rest in peace Marcellus Haley.

-Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Tell us more about your dad. What kind of dad do you have? Tell us about your childhood memories with dad, your grandma. We appreciate the questions and the love for Cell, but we also want to know more about Naudie Bo and what makes him tick.

I Have Dreams

Man this life is worth living because I have dreams and before I die I plan to accomplish things. I want kids. I want a big house. I want to be able to look down on the city and say I did something with my life unlike some of my partnas that never did anything with theirs.

-B Yod, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We like your enthusiasm. In order to make it in this world you have to have to believe in yourself. We like that you are thinking big and expecting the best for yourself. It's going to be a long, hard road but you can do it.

Life Worth

Why is life worth living? To me it ain't, because I'm just living to die. I care about my family and my friends, but I just be thinking about death when I'm alone. So many of my close friends and family members died.

Not that I'm comparing myself to them, but if I wasn't in jail, I probably would have been with them. Every time I go to sleep, I dream about getting shot or me shooting at somebody. I don't know why I be having these dreams, but I have been dreaming every night, I think it's a sign.

-Phats, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Phats, can you think of anything in this universe that just lives to die? Even plants have a purpose. That is how nature works. You may not know what your purpose is, but it surely isn't just to die. Otherwise, why live? Take advantage of this great opportunity called life. You have so much potential. Find a purpose, one you can be proud of that will benefit others. The "sign" says, wrong way! Turn your life around and find a purpose.

It Pains Me ...

it pains me to see
my family members dying
it pains me to see
them doing bad
selling drugs or
doing them
it pains me
to see them cry
it pains me
when i cannot ride
it pains me to be in here
it pains me to be out there

-Joseph, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It pains us to read your piece, but in a good way: like muscles get sore from a lot exercise, you've exercised our hearts with the truth. But now, we put "to ride" on the bad side, 'cause it's people who hurt, get hurt, kill and die.

RIP Marcellus

What it really be Beat? What's good? It's been four months and 22 days since you been gone. I still don't know why you had to go so early.

June 19th was your birthday. You turned 19 and like some of the bras I was locked up for it. Dam bra you really six feet, ninja, you didn't deserve none of what happened. Why you had to get hit bra?

What happened? Why you just let go? Why did you stop breathin'?

We miss you Cell. I never would have thought I would happen to say RIP Cell but here I am 2006 askin' God to please put Marcellus Haley's soul to rest. But we know you're in a better place where you can be in peace. We love and miss you Cell. Watch over us and guide us through the right path. Rest in peace Marcellus Haley.

-Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've written so many beautiful pieces about this friend you've lost...we're curious if you could switch perspectives and write one as if it's from him to you, rather than you to him. What would his voice say to you today, if he could speak? Step up!

They Say I Miss Pain

can't you feel it
it hurt so bad
you can't
what wrong with you
how come you can't feel it
i don't believe you
what do you
what do you feel travis
"nothing at all"
just nothing, huh
well let me tell you
you're missing out, it's wonderful
"so you telling me i miss out on that"
i got my own pain
that came from life and the game
it just gave me so much pain
that sometime i think i'm insane
i hope one day that i'm out the game
we all going to change

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What's wonderful is the change, the feeling of life once you're out of the game. And what's insane is putting it off till "one day" 'cause the only day you ever have in which to make a change is today! No one can face the pain every minute of the day, but trying to feel nothing is not the way. 'Cause if you feel no pain, you're not likely to change — and if you fail to change, you keep setting yourself up from the same old pain from life and from the game. So face the pain and start the change, and one day you'll know how wonderful it can be to have a heart as open to joy and happiness because it feels some security in knowing Travis is not who he used to be, a wounded beast acting out savagely.

Too Much

Q-vo Beat? First, I want to send my love and respect. Well this Lil' Mousie. I live in Livermore. Well today I'm hella happy, I talked to my homie Lil' Oso. We got into it and we all cut out, then he went back with the older head, just them two. These rivals were deep. They all had bats they caught us slipping. They broke the older homie's arm with a bat and they split my homie Oso's head open in two places and cracked his cheek and hit his heart. He went into a coma!

I called his house collect from these East Bay county walls! And he answered my call and he was alright. I was happy to hear my homies voice again and to know he was alive! He said he died and came back to life!

Well I was glad not to lose a homie. Best believe God is with the homies, feel me?

-Lil' Mousie 150 Crew

From The Beat: Oh, Lil' Mousie, getting into it with others is what got your homies into that situation in the first place. When will the cycle of retaliation end? Be glad that your homie is still alive. Be glad that you are still alive! You know the consequences of your actions. Think about what may result from retaliation. What good will it do? Be smart Mousie, not impulsive.

My Life At the Age of Seventeen

My life is over with, because I am going through a lot of things right now — and I can't get no help on that. But I told my grandma that I need to see someone.

It will never happen. I hope that I can get out anyway, and that I can get a job and find me a girl to talk to — so I can keep myself motivated. I am going to go to college out of state, so I can make some money, so I can buy a house, so I don't have to depend on non one.

Only person I can depend on is my grandma. So when I get my house, she is the only person that is coming to my house to live with my and my girl. Only my grandma and my girl and me, are going to be in my life. At the age of seventeen, I hope this wish comes true.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope your wish comes true, too. And we hope you do find someone to work with you. Try contacting the Oakland mentor program, and ask for a mentor. You can even call The Beat and ask for David Muhammad who works at both places (our phone is in every issue of The Beat, page three, bottom). But you can't use needing someone else's help as an excuse to give up on yourself, 'cause with all the help in the world, it still comes down to you — it always comes down to what you do and don't do, yourself. In the end, no one can do it for you. So keep working on your anger issues, everyday. At bedtime, go over in your mind each time you lost your temper or almost lost it. Think about what you did wrong, what you did right, and what you could have done better. Day by day, week by week, you'll slowly get better at it.

Why?

Finding out my friend J-5 passed away and my friend Ron a few days ago made my smile disappear for a long time. My smile still gone; I just want to ask this - why J-5 had to go to San Francisco and why Ron had to shoot at 5-0? Damn, why ma brahs had to go?

-Lil' Turk, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You sound very frustrated and very hurt, and we are very sorry to hear about your friends. No one wants to see the people they care about lose their lives, especially when it seems like it could have been avoided. We hope you are learning from their mistakes just by watching rather than having to learn them the hard way.

Untitled

Cold was my soul
Untold was the pain
I faced when you left me
A rose in the rain
So I soar through
Razor that never unchained
Would your dark nails of
faith
Be pushed through my veins
again

-Jennifer, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't know exactly who or what you refer to in this poem, but it is chilling. It is very difficult to write something that makes the reader feel. You've been able to do that, so please don't stop writing your lovely poetry.

The Crew

As always RIP Cell aka Marcellus H. What it really be Beat? Lil' Naudie Bo still in this G thang. Yea, what's really good huh? Last time I looked it was only a few of us in here. All bad shhh do ya'll want to see the new hall hell? Naw 'cause I sure in hell ain't seein' it. Bra gettin' home sup release and sayin' to hell with that and go on the run and not even a month later back in ALACO's hand. Me downs and guess what the judge, DA and 5-0 saying.

Ha-ha, I'm laughing at you all, 'cause all we doin' is putting the money in their pockets when all we tryin' to do is put their money in our pockets fast, but it's good 'cause everything happens for a reason and they can't hold us down for too long.

The crew is all we know but all that house smacking is burnt out. It's about that time for a new hustle 'cause most, some, naw all of us either ain't goin' to school or on the run. Ain't goin' home or locked up and I'm about through with that shhh. I'm ready to be takin' hella long. It's only two things you got to do is pray and believe and it will come, just put it in God's hands and he'll lead us through that legit path fast like a OPD task car. Wow that's fast.

This goes out to the following...T-B, I got dumb ass love for you. You already know how deep it gets. We got like another month to go and we'll be on your way to a placement. Sonny Dzol: Love you bra stay strong. Do your strut on that straight tip and stay on 'cause I'm trying to get on the same page you and Chris on. I got a couple more lines to go and I'll be on that same chapter. Love you bra and hurry up and right back. Chris my ninja: you made it back to camp. It worked bra. You already know what I be talkin' 'bout. You bra stay strong. I'll see you soon hopefully and you write back to this ninja! Buda: love you ninja stay stong and safe on them streets. You'll be out soon. Happy birthday Ty Dizol bra bra: don't run get it out the way. Love you bra, I wish you was wit' me, 'cause I be laughing my ass off when I'm with you. Forget bra I told not to run now look two weeks later back in county blues but it's a good stay strong love you bra. Tonio: love you bra you back up in here with me you should have stayed. Law: what's good? It was 'bout time to get this shhh over with anyway love you bra (I'll be good) dedicated to you all, I love you ninjas and I'm praying for us.

-Lil Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are stepping up and giving your crew some valuable advice: do your program, stay free, and find the other path through Oakland's streets. Time to take the lead on the legit hustle, it sounds like you're saying. Keep saying it, and if your friends are true friends and true men, they will join you. And don't forget to call The Beat when you get out, for some support. We are looking forward to the next chapter of your story!

Just Promise

just promise me
that whenever i fall
you'll help me back to my feet
promise me that you'll treat
this love with special care
protect it from unnecessary pain you see
i love you and i'm devoted let it be known
to live lovin' you
promise me no man can ever take my place
touch my heart freely while yours i embrace
promise me that you'll never walk away
whatever issues we have you'll learn it's a mistake
promise me you'll never give up on yourself
because i'll never give up on you
i promise i'll never have no one else
and you promise me too

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your love poetry is so well rehearsed, you can let it flow in rhymed verse every week in the pages of The Beat. And what's more, we're pretty sure it gets copied and sent home with many other nom de plumes.

Comfort Zone

They told me that I'm in my own little world. It's exactly true, only because I've seem to live in this world only through these eyes of mine. I'd rather live in my little world. I mean, the only reason why, is because, behind every great dream, there's a bad nightmare.

My eyes only want to see wonderful things! My mind wants to envision better things. My heart wants to feel better feelings than pain. My soul wants to love, instead of being enslaved by the tyranny of time. It pains me to see a space of time lost. One thing we can't or won't bring back, is time.

My life is worth living because of my thoughts, my right thoughts. What pains me is to see a waste of talent, all the things I'm great at: singing, writing, rapping, acting, modeling (lol). I could be a top teen model! Naw, but real talk, I'm in my own world only because I live positively in that world — and when people read this world of mine, they'll be wanting to be in it, females especially. Dudes? Flick 'em.

-Lil Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You do have a lot of talents, and you need to focus yourself to harness your abilities and become productive in life. You've got to leave the street behind, even if some of the females living that life get a hold on your mind. Also, most artists (and your range of talents all fall in the artistic category) have to support themselves, at least for periods of time, with "straight" jobs — and so will you need to. Don't let the temptations of fast money in the street keep luring you to self-defeat.

Life Worth Living

Life worth living

My life is worth living

And everything I'm worth giving

Things are hard

Your life is like on an ATM card

We are worth a lot and money

Our life is as sweet and loveable like honey,

We are all on the run

Our life is worth a ton

It's not worth giving your life to give your money up

Or get shot with a gun

I have many dreams in life

I can't make my dreams come true being in the
Hall

I got to keep my head up, and stand tall,
Don't let no one tell you your life is a piece of
shh...

And you're so butt hurt, it make you have low self esteem,

You break down and fall

Life is worth living,

Everyday goes by,

Sitting desperately waiting in your cell trying
not to cry,

People all up in your face, looking at you saying
you a disgrace,

I can't do anything about it 'cause I'm in here,

With all this anger and fear,

My life ain't worth no tear,

Life is worth living!

-I love life, 150 Crew

From The Beat Once you believe that life is worth living and in particular that your life is worth living, you have gained something powerful. Now you can get on with the business of creating your life as a temple, a home, a comfort zone. Now you can start taking steps, however slow it might seem, towards a life that doesn't circulate around violence, crime and incarceration. You can make the bad things good and the good things better if you keep trying.

Change

this game sucks the blood out of us like a leech
 we talk about change but we don't practice what we preach
 we need reasonable goals not too out of reach
 we need to learn before we try to teach
 talk about change and this and that
 but when we get out it ain't no fact
 go back to the old ways, back to the 'hood
 back to doin' no good
 no excuses like "i would if i could"
 'cause you can and you should
 i know i said this many times
 then i get caught up for more than parking fines
 pulled a serious crime
 now look at me, writing these lines
 all for the beat
 i need to get stabilized on my feet
 'cause i will not accept defeat
 i'm'a do this legally, i will not cheat.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The advice you give upfront, speaks directly to incarcerated youth you live among — and it's the truth spoken by a sadder but wiser tongue. So many of the platitudes you learn when you're getting "faced on game" are straight-up lies. Though they seem true for a minute to a gangster's eyes, in the end they prove to be a set-up for more pain, whether it's walking through prison gates, a hospital door or into an untimely grave. Yet those who live to see reality can't be cheated, quit the game to earn their money legally, and just as you say — will never be defeated! We have faith in what you say and know you'll go all the way.

Potnas' Funerals

I hate going to my potna's funerals, especially when it's a person that's been with you since you was a youngster! I know a couple of gang bangers (from more than one gang) that was my potnas and was always there when a ninja had to smoke — I been to they' funerals.

I hate going to funerals, but I got to show respect for my brah. All these funerals I been at, makes life a bitch! I just think and say, "I know I'll be next one day." But that's life. I mean, I don't bang no gang or color, none of that — I'm wit' that turf shhh. It's all about the paper out here. If you ain't eating, you ain't doing none.

But funerals ain't cool. I'm a young man, living, and my boys dying! But all I gotta say is, "RIP to all my boys!" And I got my head up. Miss ya!

-Lil' T, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sureño, Norteño, Border Batters: these gang wars are pure insanity (valorized as La Loca Vida) that ends in all these needless funerals of young men (and sometimes innocent bystanders). But the turf wars aren't much better, with drive-by's and haters, and OG's returning from prison to reclaim the spot. The dope game looks like it's all about the paper, and so it goes for a while, but in the end it's all about jails, hospitals and death. You say, "That's life," but it doesn't have to be your life — or, more pertinently, it doesn't have to be your death — change how you make your paper to something legal, and live safer!

This Big Dark Room

If I were to create my very own comfort zone it would be in a big dark room. The walls would be a mixture of black and purple designs. There would be no roof—you would be able to see all the stars and the shining full moon's glow would be the only light glittering through the empty space. And for comfort and to cheer me up I would have my beloved pet rat (Noodles). He would be running around, climbing all over me, making squeaky noises. There would be a little music going through the room; the vice would be whispering sweet words in my ear, and suddenly it would rain a soft mist of tears rolling down my face, but tears of love.

-Jennifer, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What an unusual and beautiful scene you have created. Keep practicing your writing skills by doing just what you've done here, describing a scene that your reader can see, hear, smell and taste. If you do keep practicing, we believe you will emerge as a strong writer.

Hey Beat

Hey what's up wit' it Beat. Really aint got much to say today. But I guess I'll let you know what's goin on wit' me. my B-Day is Sunday (Aug. 20). I will be 17 and this is my second year in a row locked up.

Right now I'm fightin' for the right to see my daughter. My Auntie is tryin' to adopt my daughter and terminate my rights forever. I'm scared to lose her.

I go to court next week for my case (Aug. 25). I'm totally stressed out. I miss my man, daughter and family. I stress over these people 24/7. I love them dearly and do not wish to cause them no more pain. I'm ready for change. Tired of living in this game. Ready to love myself, put self first and do for self.

Well Beat, next week I'll let you know how my B-day went. I'm out, bye...

-Gina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Happy belated birthday! Birthdays, like New Year's, are times when we can make resolutions about our life. It sounds like you've decided to stop messing up and instead be a mother who gets out of jail, stays out of jail, and raises a daughter who will never go to jail. We hope you make it happen. In the meantime, maybe you can talk with your aunt about letting her have temporary custody while you get your act together and prove to yourself and others that you can keep it together. You should find a way to make her your ally, not your enemy. After all, she will always be a part of your daughter's life and it sounds like you both want what's best for your daughter.

Can't Nobody Say I Ain't In Love

can't nobody say i ain't in love
painful tears i gotta cry and sob
live for me
even though you said you'll die for me
give to me
my heart is still yours to be
nothing else but love
you're my house in my heart
i live to love you
you're everything i need
so can't nobody say
i ain't in love

-Lil Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You write about love with the authority of experience, and everyone reading your words is feeling this. However, no one else can ever be everything you need, 'cause how you think and what you choose to do will determine where you'll be after your release — staying out there with someone you love, or coming straight back to lock up. Your greatest need is to see through to why this keeps happening to you — and make some fundamental changes. You life will be what you make it.

Looking At My Life

Hey, it's Lil' Seven. I was a boy that was just doing what I needed to be doing — going to juvenile hall, in and out, running from my group home a lot of times.

When I ran from my last group home, I was just thinking it was nothing, that nothing was going to happen. One day I was chilling with my girl and my bro, and next thing you know I was locked up and just looking at four walls and thinking — when am I getting out. I am facing a possible life sentence. And I was just thinking that I was going to have a good time with my girl. And that is not all. I am going to have a little girl in a few months. I am going to name her Jasmin. And thinking that I might never get out makes me feel like crap. My little girl might never play with her dad. And I might never be able to get her a dog to play with. Man, that feels like crap. I guess that is life and I should be proud. I know that this life will end one day and I will be in a better place.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Don't give up Uriel. We know that you've taught yourself to read and write. Your heart and mind can grow, even when you're locked up. We're hoping the best for you. Educate yourself. Prepare yourself so that when the time comes, and you are once again a free man, you can be the kind of dad your daughter deserves.

Pains Me

it pains me to see reality
little-ass kids living in poverty
grown-ass people with no property
walkin' the streets cold and lonely
all they ask is for, one chance only
and we who are fortunate, take it for granted
take something perfect and make it slanted
it pains me to see our youth dying
childrenless mothers at home crying
saying it's okay, but why are we lying
letting our hopes go up like smoke flying
kids with no moms, moms with no kids
getting canned food and poppin' the kids
why do we do this, why is this how it is
why can't we live in happiness
it pains me to see me
look at myself like a criminal t.v.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The pain you feel is real, is deep, is something you will always keep in a corner of your heart. But use it as a reason to start to change the part you play — be part of the solution, not part of the pollution that poisoning babies from birth. It's hard to see sometimes who has it worse, the motherless child, or the childless mother — it's a curse of poverty, dysfunction, despair and lying. The worse lies are the ones we tell ourselves and believe, 'cause how you gonna get your life right when you're self-deceived? So you're doing important work, you both strip away the lies and stop hiding from the truth. It may not reduce the pain, but it allows you to put your pain to use. And, eventually, by changing what you choose to do, you transform the world — at least for you, your family, too! And who knows who is listening to you, reading your pieces and thinking life through. Your poetry holds a mirror to truth.

Why Is Life Worth Living

Life is worth living 'cause my sister, she's only seven months old and she's my shining star, 'cause I was there when she was born, I was the first person to hold her after my mom and step-dad. I can't wait until I get out of this hell. I miss my lil' mami so much you just don't know. I can't live without her, I can't sleep without her, really. I don't understand why I can't be without her, it's like I had her. It's like I pushed her out of my womb myself. I have a very special bond with her, it's crazy. Man it's very hard not being there on the outs in her presence to hold her, kiss her, change her stinky diapers; I miss my baby. I miss my Tinker Butt...

My precious lil angel, your big sis gone be home soon!!
That's why life is living for me...

-Shay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good reason. If love of your Tinker Butt is what keeps you out of jail, we can't imagine a more positive reason. We think she misses you hella much too!

Mom Is Comfort

My comfort zone is going
Thinking of me and my man
Being together for a life as one
I cry every night because
I know that because of my dad
I will never see my mom
But I know I will see her someday
Even though she's
not here now she will always be
in my comfort zone

-Jordan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thinking of your mom is your comfort zone, but how unfair that the one who should be comforting you can't be there to hold you and hug you. As you must know and feel, we believe she is there with you in spirit, watching over you, hoping that you'll find real comfort in your life.

What's Behind My smile

A lot of things can make my smile disappear.
A lot of things can make my smile water into tears.
Something that you fear can make your smile
disappear.

But most of the time you can change
Your tears and fears into careers.
Most of the time what make your smile disappear
Is something that happened in past years.
Besides that my smile stay the same for years.

-Lil' Chad, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you are saying happiness is something that you control, something that you make happen, in spite of all the bad things that happen. Oftentimes we forget that we have control over emotions. When someone says something ignorant or we have to pay bills with small paychecks we cannot blame them for our reactions – you have to take control and not let outsiders rule your insides.

Another Chance

I got another chance to turn my life around,
To be glad to smile and not frown.
I want to become the father that I said I would be
Instead of always hustling on the streets.
My cousin got killed a day after my birthday.
Man out of all days I think that was the worst day.
There are too many killings in Oakland period.
I know that there is a better way to deal with it.
Just to know I will be able to go home makes me
happy.

I have been doing a very good program here.
I am tryin' to do good at camp
And stay to myself like a real soldier.
This might be my last time writing for The Beat
Because I will be leaving this place in a couple of
weeks.

So now I get to do my dance
Because God gave me another chance.

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We are impressed that you are taking your upcoming release so seriously and are taking it for what it is – a second chance. It sounds as though you want to make some real changes in your life and are putting in the work in order to make that possible. Continue to work hard, stay focused and don't let anyone stop you from living the way you know you should be living. Playing the game only has but a few endings and none of them are good.

Life

I'm living dangerous and smart
 So when the police come I dart
 And now I'm hiding soundless, not even a fart
 So I kick, go back to the hood and get on
 I got dollas, new kicks so I'm in that zone
 Why risk my freedom, should just stay home
 Or I could been talkin' on the phone
 But instead I'm doin' crime
 And I don't even like doin' time
 Now if you could read this it don't make sense
 Not no more risk my freedom for any expense
 Life so short so why am I so tense
 And always got my fists clenched
 So quick to do wrong and go another inch
 'Cause life's not fair, so dread your hair
 Do what you want, tell you if you dare
 You think about them, thinking yo' ass been scared
 Not me, I bang and I could go anywhere.

-Billitant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Brilliant rhymes... your writing shows so much talent, and also shows that you deserve more outlets for that talent than just riding around the streets. You have been given the gift of brains, talent and heart. What are you going to do with that triple gift?

The Wrong Way

If I had a way out of the game and go legal I could start my life over and finish school and go to college and play football. But now I will never do that because I started my life off the wrong way.

But if I had never was born in Oakland I would never have been in the mess I'm in, I would have been in school and playing football and would have had a job and I would not have had to rob people to get what I want.

-Lil' Man Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: God Lord Man Man, "I's like you write the same week each week! And each week we give you the same answer: IT'S NOT TOO LATE FOR YOU. Yes, you're looking at time, yes you have big struggles ahead, but just because you started off the wrong way doesn't mean you have to end up the wrong way.. you have your thoughts, your dreams, your determination, your reading, your self-education, and eventually, one day, either sooner or later than you think, the doors are going to unlock and it will be up to you to decide what to do with your physical freedom. If you devote your time to getting mentally free, you'll know how to keep that physical freedom, and you'll be able to inspire other people to follow in your footsteps.

It's Time

It's time for me to step up. I've been with my girl for a long time and she's been a big part of my life. She's also been a big help. Her name is Keisha. She started on the varsity basketball team. She has dreams and has had them for some time now. I've been doing her wrong for a year or two and she's still with me. To tell you the truth, she deserves better than me. She's hella smart, doing good with herself and I feel like I'm just holding her back. She doesn't believe that. She says she believes in me and knows that I will make it.

It's time for me to be the man she wants me to be because I need to give her that and she deserve more than I can give. It's time for me to step up and be a man because soon that's what I'll be. You don't have to be 25 to be a man. You can be 40 and still not be a man. What makes a man is his ability to take care of his business - getting up going to work, taking care of responsibilities, taking care of your love ones. Kasha helps make me the man I am today but I'm not going to call myself one until I'm told I'm one. Now it's time.

-Byrd, 150 Crew

From the beat: You sound terribly lucky to have met such a smart young woman, who clearly is on the right track and so firmly by your side. She must see something in you, maybe something you don't even realize is there, to have stayed with you over the years. You can't make the decision as to whether or not you are holding her back because only she knows that. You are right about being a man - being a man doesn't have so much to do with age as it does to taking responsibility for your self. We know that you very much want to change for this young woman because you owe it to her. But you are wrong - you don't just owe it to her to do better. You owe to yourself. We want so much to make the people who have been good to us happy but sometimes the best thing we can do for them is be good to ourselves for ourselves.

Love, My Definition

Love is my lady.
Love is sweet as butterscotch and
As beautiful as a flower.
She is very understanding,
The kind of girl you depend on.
Love her with respect.
So hold on to your dime pieces and
Treat them well
Because once you loose them,
You will regret it and I will bet it.

-Lil' Drew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Love is a beautiful thing that all people, both men and women, take for granted at one time or another. So to all you young men (and women) take Lil' Drew's advice – treat your partners with love and respect because sometimes you don't know what you've got until it's gone (and by then it's too late).

Damn Shame

Late at night tears coming down my face I'm falling
falling to my knees, praying and hoping that God can
hear me calling.

But these streets keep calling my name, and it's a damn
shame.

Only sixteen and I can't be tamed for this game.

I don't got no good memories of playing sandlot
I just remember getting ready for school,
Kissing momma, then hit the stash spot.

thirty-eight in my pocket backpack full of sacks
counting cheese in the class
Balling out to the Max

I got a mouth full of demons and a heart full of hate
the only thing I want in life is to represent and get cake.

-Gerald, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a heartbreaking poem, Gerald, not just because of what you've been through, but because on the one hand you SEE clearly how messed up things are in your life, and on the other you don't seem like you want to change it. You write about living to die, and we feel the bitterness and hate in this poem, but there's a love too: The love for your mother in that little detail, and the love of words, too. You don't say you love them of course, but your skill in rhyming and describing shows an artist at work, an artist who knows that how we express ourselves matters. So there's hate and hopelessness in you - but love and hope too. Which side of you is going to win?

My Family, My Girl, My Life

G-ondas Beat, this is your homito Curioso from Hayward.

What I wanna write about is my thoughts. I think a lot while I'm in here. I think about my family, my girl, and my life. My family, because they just don't seem to care about me and I'm thinking they gonna go to Mexico. I really don't care because I got someone that loves me just as much, Mi jainita(girl). She's the one who supports me for who I am, even though I've been with here one year and eight months, I still feel the same love as my family's love. After all, my last thing I think about is my life.

I'm a gang member from Hayward and my life is Harsh because of the life I'm living. On the outs I be kickin' it, doing drugs, makin' money the easy way. So I've been thinking and thinking to change and get my act together because if I keep up with my life I'm living right now it ain't gonna take me no where in life.

Saludo, keep your heads to the sky. Alrato.

-Curioso, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Curioso, as you sit in the Hall think about what you can do to change your life. Is it possible to get out of Hayward? How can you escape gang life when all your friends are gang members? That's the common mistake that young people make. If you're serious about change, then you've got to make some serious changes. Doing drugs and making fast money may seem fun and easy, but you've barely begun to experience the consequences of that lifestyle. Look ahead. Where do you want your life to be in 5 years? Every decision that you make today will determine where your life will go. Be smart.

My Ticket Out

My ticket out is turning a different route.

My ticket out is doing things that I always doubt.

My ticket out is showing instead of telling you what I'm about.

My ticket out is doing something no one thought I could do.

My ticket out is stay away from my old crew.

-Lil' Chad, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a great piece - short but to the point. Oftentimes people talk about changing but then don't want to actually do what it takes to change. One of the toughest things to change, especially when you are young, is your group of friends. We are glad to see you are willing to make the sacrifices to ensure your ticket out is one-way.

Funerals

funerals

something i don't like

someone is having a funeral every night

when people go to funerals they cry

but nothing can bring my cousin

back to life

i imagine if he was here

'cause i wouldn't have to look at

dat casket with fear

now everything is different

only good things i'm wishing

only if he would've listened

he would still be here

every time crackin' jokes in your ear

but we gon' miss you always

on my mind everyday

i'll mourn with a special prayer

for my sixteen-year-old cousin andrew p.

-Ally Bo

From The Beat: RIP Andrew P. — Ally Bo's words could hardly hit harder at heaven's gate, protesting your fate. Let's all just pray that those you love will listen to what words of wisdom have to say. If love could bring you back, you'd be here today!

That Life

That life is like a long-ass movie you hope never ends, especially where I'm from, Oakland. 'Cause you think it's just a color, but naw, it's way deeper.

Postin' on the block is fun and all, but you gotta watch yo back for rival gangs and gang task, which to us is another gang 'cause they'll shoot you just as fast as anybody else. And yeah, postin' on one spot does get old so we do it movin to our other spot down the street. But you never know what can happen at any given time and you know it could really be crazy at times. One day someone could come through with Katers(AKs) and hit the whole block. But that's why we stay ready for anything. And sometimes homies slip, but we stay strong and together always, 'cause we a family and when you lose a family member it's hard right?

I almost lost my cousin but stayed strong, and when you lived that life there's things that come with it like, I was shot, got jumped hella times, you probably gon' come here and you gotta watch yo' back at all times and you can't get out. Well, you can, but that's being a sucka to us. It's just life and me and my family gon' live it to the fullest 'cause in the Town that's how it's going down.

The gang ain't no different than the game. We stuck in this shhh. Just tryna get it and the only thing stoppin' me is if I lose my life. Well that's just a lil' part of it, but I'm out so RIP Big Joe, G-Money, Monster, Rascal one love.

-Angelo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Angelo, we can feel that you are sincere in what you are saying. But, what's so bad about being seen as a sucka? Your so-called, "friends/homies" will hate on you if you want better? If you want to protect yourself from a life of violence, you will be looked down on? We can respect the fact that these are your homies, the people that you kick it with everyday, all day. But, what kind of people are these really? Do they want what's best for you? Obviously NOT! What about if one of your boys came to you and said he wanted out of this lifestyle, how would you feel about that? The bottom line is: If you don't find a way out, you are doomed to a life in prison or a very short, stressful life. Is peer-pressure really that strong, coming from people who obviously DON'T want the best for you. Take a few moments everyday to picture your life without all the violence and stress. It's not impossible and it definitely won't be easy, but you really do have the power to decide where your life will go. You're too smart Angelo. Think.

Broken

dark waters i'm in
 sharks don't matter
 flying in a storm
 lightning doesn't matter
 the sands of time are almost at
 an end
 as i fall ten stories
 and my bones brake
 it doesn't matter
 a bullet spins through my head
 and i die
 i don't matter
 because i was already dead
 when my heart you shattered

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel you, but no, it is not so. Bones break and also mend, hearts too heal again. Emotional pain tears you apart, but not like a bullet to the head. Don't confuse "the dark night of the soul" with being dead, rather learn to feel your way without sight, in the absence of all light, instead.

Shear

your last lullaby
 sung by a mouth
 that's too far
 for you to hear
 and the mouth
 that sings this beautiful melody
 hopes that the sound
 puts a ringing in your ears
 and till this very day
 i pray that one day
 you can hear my song

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Choirs of angels take up your lyric, and the ears of your beloved in dreams hear it. And yet at break of day, memory of the beautiful melody fades away — but the meaning stays.

you should have listened
 after i said "i'll show you all"
 for doubting my thoughts

My Thoughts

no please
 don't say another word
 against what i'm for
 don't mimic my statements
 when you're not sure
 about my situations in life
 just focus on yours
 say what you want
 but i'm not going to budge
 you can talk all you want
 but who are you to judge
 say what you want
 and i won't hold a grudge
 you should have listened
 after i said "i'll show you all"
 for doubting my thoughts
 was your biggest downfall
 now you're mad
 because i'm in control
 now i'm on top of the world saying
 i told you so

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When truth fell, the world turned upside down, and hell became a place beyond the clouds, judging all with faithless doubts. While down below the fires of genius, melted gold into rivers of seamless revelation: there is no controlling truth's conflagration. Love was a flower till control turned it sour.

My Coco

my coco was there
 when i was cold and alone
 my coco was there
 to keep me nice and warm
 my coco has black, brown and white
 all in a swirl
 my coco will always be
 my favorite girl
 green eyes
 my coco i would get
 tattooed on my back
 i love my girl coco
 she's the family cat

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Imagine that, the family cat. We can see Coco slowly blink her green eyes as you scratch her black/brown/white back — we call that "calico", you know — Coco the calico cat! Imagine that.

Vanity

people stuck
 outside in a line
 that they don't want to see
 overwhelmed by little control
 they use it wrong
 because power is new
 so they use it wrong
 in their own way
 manipulate power
 they use it wrong

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There's a famous saying, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely." It's used to apply to great tyrants of government and industry, but as far as we can see — abuse of power is epidemic in so-called correctional facilities. A university psychologist did an experiment once, where some students played the part of guards and others prisoners, and the psychologist was the warden. He had to call it off because of rampant abuse of power. Call it vanity or insanity, there it is.

Tomorrow, Six Months, Five Years

what am i going to do tomorrow
 i don't know
 maybe i'll stay and play this game
 but i might not
 too much of the same thing
 over and over again
 too many of the same mentalities
 all trying to win
 what about in six months
 i want to be out of here
 out all on my own
 and my worst fear
 is me not reaching my goal
 what about five years from now
 i want a family started
 along with a couple of books published
 and i don't care if i'm the sellers' top leading
 as long as you get something out of my poems that you're reading

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You don't have to wait five years for readers who get something out of your poems they read, 'cause that's exactly what's going on with more than a few readers of The Beat. As for the street game, if you're not certain you'll quit, then you're setting yourself up for more of this. We're not hating, but it takes everything you've got, all your determination, to get off the spot, to rise above the traps set in the street that deliver you to death or to the police — and that's a fact. You've got to accept reality before you can change it. Change your mentality and maintain it.

you should have listened
 after i said "i'll show you all"
 for doubting my thoughts

Virgin I Love

unforbidden questions
 cause stress and tension
 left unanswered
 so these confessions written
 i love you so much
 i'll wait for you to unclothe
 because of you everything is better
 because my heart you bestowed
 i'll wait to be a part of you
 until you're ready
 as long as you let me hold you
 like you hold your teddy
 everything i do
 like the air i breathe
 the food i eat
 and if you want me to
 massage your feet
 it's like i have a virus
 and you're an antidote i need twice daily
 the doctors call it
 i can't live without my baby

and they keep saying
 if i take too much
 that i'll overdose
 or go crazy
 but i'm already there
 and it's worth it
 because in my messed up world
 you make everything so perfect
 it's like i feel the first hit
 of the summer breeze
 every time we kiss
 emotions shift and move
 from my head to my knees
 and i love it
 just as much as i love loving you
 i just hope to god
 that you feel the same way too

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Such a poem of lovely devotion that finds serenity in desire's commotion and rests like the heart of an innocent child who knows pure love undefiled, refusing postulates of trashy talk that it might rather choose to walk straight and true, beloved as the poet hopes to find by ceasing to pursue — in the heart and the mind of another who also already feels it too.

*Time To Eat*

I sit back and reminisce as these days go by
 Good times and bad, 'hood dreams and black skies
 Knowing the bad things I've done
 I ask myself, "Why?" Then the answer comes
 These are the days of my life!
 I ask myself, "What is life?"
 Well, life is what you make it
 It can be a dream or you could fake it
 My observation of life is: it's like a dinner plate
 God holds the fork and picks certain food away
 There must be something about how my family taste
 Because he picked damn near all of 'em off his plate

-James, Marin

From The Beat: In this poem, are you equating whatever you've done that's wrong with the fact that many of your family members have died, James? If you really want to know why your relatives have died, you may have to ask yourself some tough questions. Even though it's your family and you love them, can you analyze the death of each of your relatives and figure out if, to any degree, they played a part in their own deaths? Can you look at your own life as critically and see if you're involved in any mess that is threatening your life? You don't have to answer to anybody but yourself, but if you are in any mess, can you get out now? What could be more precious to you than your life?

I Don't Play Games

Looking in her eyes, I see a future for us
 She told me that she will wait while I'm locked up
 Thinking of her day and night drives me insane
 I want to be with her, but she thinks I play games
 I told her I been there and done that
 Honestly, I'm on her like a fitted cap
 She said she likes me, too
 But it's kinda scary, because I don't know if it's true
 I really need someone like her by my side
 Because I know she down and ready to ride
 If you ask me, it was love at first sight
 If another dude disrespect her, I be ready to fight
 I'm getting to dat age in life
 And now it's about time to make her my wife

-James, Marin

From The Beat: Yeah all that sounds nice and sweet but what girl/young lady or woman wants to be with some guy who's sitting up in jail talking about love and marriage? We're not trying to "clown" you but we've heard this song a thousand times and it's kind of played out. What are words without action? B-S! If you really like this young lady as much as you say you do you have to do more than give her a few empty words. You have to demonstrate through your actions. And not by beating up some guy on the streets but by not beating up some guy and going back to jail. In fact you have to stay out of jail, get back into school, get your shhh together. Find you a job. Build up a positive atmosphere around yourself... stay out of trouble and things of that nature. Otherwise you're just faking the funk! Feel the realism? The Beat goes on.

Girl, Nooo

She's the beauty and I'm the beast
 I say yadidimean when I'm talkin' sweet
 She's the blood running through my veins
 She's the drug that makes me go insane
 In her eyes I see moons and stars
 In my eyes she see money and cars
 It ain't trickin', if you got it
 Every dime, nickel and dollar
 She ain't getting it if she can fit it
 I'm a cheap ninja
 Girl, forget it

-James, Marin

From The Beat: Usually when people have to flash their riches it's because they've either never had money or they want people to think that they have money when they really don't. And then again if you're flashin' bling (real or fake, doesn't matter) what kind of girl do you think you're going to attract... some nice, self respecting, intelligent, open minded young lady with a future? Hell nah! You and anyone who reads this knows what kind of girl you're going to attract. Wise up youngsta!

What Makes My Smile Disappear?

Hmmm! My smile appears when I'm happy that my mom came to see me, but as soon as it's time to go, my smile fades away like the day because my mom starts to cry and say bye-bye.

My smile disappeared tis mid July, 2006 on a Friday. It was my birthday. I was looking cute with my apple bottoms and my Jordans, and I just got my hair done and just got off EMP. I thought I was about to have fun. I'd been in the house for two months and couldn't smoke or drink. It was all bad. I did something stupid with my cousin and ended up at Hillcrest for three months. That took my smile away from that day until I leave.

-Shanique

From The Beat: The only way to keep your mom from crying when she says bye-bye is not to come here to begin with so she doesn't have to say bye-bye... But if you go right out and do something stupid after three months of house lock-up, then what's going to prevent you from doing something just as stupid again? We hope you think of your mother's tears the next time you're free and tempted...

My Smile Disappears When...

When I get bad news my smile disappears.

When I get angry at someone or something my smile disappears.

When I gotta go home 'cause of probation, that makes my smile disappear.

When someone I love lies to me my smile disappears.

When I think about loved ones that have died my smile disappeared.

Now when I do smile it appears, but sooner or later it will disappear again.

-Nani

From The Beat: These are all good and understandable reasons to make a smile disappear. But you could look at the same "picture" from the other side. You may know that your smile will disappear sooner or later, but all that means is that you also know that the tears that come will also disappear sooner or later, and be replaced again by a smile. Life can't be all one thing or the other, although we sure hope you're able to find more smiles than tears.

I'm Thinking

I'm thinking about my home and my mommy. I'm thinking about my friends. What I'm thinking of a lot is how I feel. What I've been feeling for a while is lonely and empty. No matter what, I always feel like people try so hard to put me down. I don't know. Do they not see the frown that is always on my face? Can they not see the pain that I've gained? I'm hurt so bad that my body feels like dirt.

Sometimes I think what did I deserve to feel this way or to live this way. Grow up with people you can trust not just that one person by your side who's there when you cry to wipe the tears away. Someone who is true, someone who respects you. The one thing that I've always been thinking of and looking for and just hopefully figure how it feels is to know how it feels to be loved and have a place where it feels that everything feels all right. That's what has always been on my mind.

-Chanel

From The Beat: What you want out of life — to be loved — is truly what we all want out of life. But the first person you need to love and respect you is you! Do you love yourself? If not, why not? Is it because of things you've done or the way you've treated people? Whatever the reasons might be, if you can identify them, then you can begin to change them, so that you make yourself into the respectful person you want to love. Look inside and make a mighty effort to change what you don't like. Once that happens, you'll be amazed at how many people feel it inside you, and respond in kind.

Drift Off A Memory

Sometimes my mente (mind) be blanking out on a memory long lost in my mind. Those times I used to kick with the homies that are now in the heavens up above. I remember you Lil' Huero, Magic, and Pelon as well. Trucho, Chuko and Mi Gallito Negro. But you guys made me open up my eyes and see how I would end up. Now I'm just drifting on a memory that will stay in my mind para siempre. Alrato.

-Morenita

From The Beat: When we consider that at your young age you've already listed six friends who are no longer in this world, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that there's something very wrong with the lifestyle you've chosen. If their deaths have truly opened your eyes and made you realize you don't want to end up as nothing more than a sad memory, you're going to have to make some very hard decisions. Do you have the strength for that? We see it in you. Do you see it in yourself?

Ticket Out

My ticket out of here and to get off probation and not come back is to get my education first and then stop hanging out with those people who I smoke with on those rainy and shiny days. Start respecting my mom because seems like she's the only one who really loves and cares about me.

-Shanique

From The Beat: We agree with you, Shanique, but how will your behavior change if you start respecting your mom? We can imagine how much she has sacrificed for you, so what are you now willing to sacrifice for her?

I'm Out

Well, Beat, I'm out September fifth, off probation. But my next piece will be in The Beat Without. I don't plan to come back, but I do plan to be the best mom I can be as a single mom. I also plan to finish school and pursue my dream of being a nurse. All I want to say is keep yo' head held high and do yo' best. And with that, I'm out.

-A Young Mom

From The Beat: Not everyone who has a child takes the job as seriously as we see you taking it, so we are as proud of you as you are of yourself. Don't forget your commitments to your son and to yourself. We will definitely look forward to that first Beat Without piece, so write us and tell us how you're doing. Thank you for all your contributions, and good luck!

What I See

I see young people lost in a game they don't even know how to play. I see them telling someone else's story, trying to pass it for their own. It's not the same. The game has changed. Too many fakes and wannabees holding a gun they don't know how to shoot. Young people these days trying to be something they're not just to be considered down or hard when they don't even know a definition of a single word that comes out of their mouth.

It's pathetic, just plain pathetic the way I see it. Leave the shooting to the ones who know the guns. Leave the killings to the ones dedicated to what they claim. Stop these wannabees and fakes.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: There is something very sad about this piece — partly because as we read it we see the very child that you claim to be talking to! How many of those "ones who know the guns" that you want to leave the shooting to have already paid with their lives? How many more will it take before you open your own eyes and realize it's not the wannabees who are the problem, it's those who think that shooting and killing can ever be legitimate behavior. Forget the "pathetic" young people who are trying to be what they're not, and start looking at your own pathetic thinking that leads to Hillcrest at best, or to permanent paralysis, lock-up or death at worst. In short, it's time for you to grow up, look around with adult eyes, and become responsible for your own choices.

Separation

Have you ever loved somebody so much

But so many people try to be involved with your business and love?

It's the way they look at you and assume that it's just not right

But I'm my own person; I'll put up a fight

So you love that person so much and you have to wait

Just because they all say, "Y'all can't be together, no way!"

But you know what? That's okay

They just hatin' because they ain't got a life or relationship dat's great

He still young, it's all gravy

I know you can wait for me, and I know for sure I'ma wait

for you, Baby

So it's all about our mind, body and soul

Stay strong my Love... if we can get through this we'll get

through it all

-T Baby

From The Beat: We're glad that this love is carrying you through, and giving you hope for the future. At the same time, experience tells us that the memory of a loving relationship is often much easier than keeping the relationship strong and growing when you're in it, because all relationships take work and commitment. We sure hope this is the one for you.

Emptiness In My Heart

Sometimes I wake up and hope what I have in my heart could be a nightmare. But I guess I had to understand the fact my carnal had to pass just like that. I pray to God every night to take all my tears and pain away but I just can't. Every day that passes I get more tears and pain.

I couldn't stand it and couldn't stop my tears when I saw him in his grave, laying there. Even though I saw him there, I still had faith that it wasn't him. I closed my eyes and closed myself. All I had in my mind was when he told me the day before if something happened to him to promise him I would be good. I didn't tell him anything 'cause I said what kind of joke is this?

But now all I want is him looking at me from the sky and be proud of me. I know I'll never forget him. I will always have an emptiness in my heart.

Alrato.

-Tiny

From The Beat: You're right, La Tiny, there will always be a hole in your big heart for this loss you are feeling. But you can do things to help fill that hole by honoring your promise to him to be good, to make him proud of what you become. When you feel his pride in you from above, then you will know you kept your word to him, and you will be able to smile with the warmth of his blessing. Don't forget.

Hypocrites

Q-vo homies? Como han estado? (What's up, Homies? How've you been?) Well some of you vatos and homitas have been telling me to calm down, to stay away from the streets, but look at you! You doing the same shhh I'm doing.

Yes, I'm trying to change but it's hard. It takes time. The calles are addictive. That's all I gotta say.. Alrato.

-Morenita

From The Beat: The streets may be addictive, Morenita, but the payoff you wrote about above (the one your six homies have already paid with their lives) means that all addictions end when you end... Something else to think about. As far as your friends doing the very thing they are telling you to do, isn't that always the way? Don't you hear older brothers and sisters telling their little siblings not to follow in their footsteps, even when they refuse to change their footsteps. Don't change your act for anyone but yourself, Morenita. It doesn't matter what "they" say. You — the person YOU are — that's what's worth living for.

Without You

We fell in love the first time I saw you. You knew how to turn my frown upside down. We became closer than I could ever imagine. On May 23, 2005, we found out I was one-month pregnant. I was the happiest I could be.

Then came July 27 and I was put away. I found out we were having a boy and two weeks later I was in a group home. I found out that you were locked up and I was sad. But I knew we would be together again. January 27, 2006 Lamar, Jr. was born, and I found out that I was no longer "wifey." I first I couldn't believe it but I found out it's the truth.

I loved you so much and I cried over you. Without you I thought I'd be weak but all the pain you caused me added no new scars but gave me pride. I'm so proud to be doing fine without you.

-A Young Mom

From The Beat: The first thing that comes to mind when we read this is why it hurts us to see children bringing children into the world. You were clearly not ready to have a child, and the proof of that is that you allowed yourself to be taken from him just two months after giving birth! You could not have been thinking of Lamar, Jr. and what he needed more than anything in the world — his mother — when you did whatever it was that gave the system power over your life. The second thing that comes to mind is how many young girls are so willing to believe what young boys tell them about love, only to find that love crashing on the rocks when the boy is just that — a boy and not a man. We are very encouraged, however, by your upbeat attitude and recognition that you don't need your baby's sire (we don't use the term "baby's daddy" unless the boy actually is acting like a daddy, which this boy is not) to be responsible. When you get out of here (this week!), just keep doing fine so you can build on that justifiable pride you're feeling!

Happy

What makes me happy? It's being with my family and my girlfriend, spending time with them and her. At the dinner table with my family and even at the movies with my girlfriend, that's what makes me happy.

But what hurts is when I get a letter from her saying that this is hard for her to write to me with me in here. She's telling me that she misses me and that she can't wait to see me. That's what brings my frown upside down.

-Yadara-I-Mean-Me

From The Beat: Maybe your girlfriend is wondering how much (or how little) you were thinking of her when you did whatever it was that gave the system power to take you from her. Maybe she's thinking that it's not fair to ask her to wait because by giving up your freedom you weren't very fair to her. Maybe it's time to think about how you want to live your life, with or without her, in a way that doesn't include becoming a slave.

Be Yourself

I think white people, black people, Chinese people, any person, should just be themselves no matter what, whether you're smart or not. You choose the path you're on right now, whether locked up, or on the streets, in school, or at home.

I'm locked up and I've got five days to go. But every day that goes by I think of it like I'm never getting out. But every day I'm myself and that's that.

-Matt

From The Beat: Yes, it's important to be yourself, but we hope that you don't have to repeat the mistakes of your past (and find yourself experiencing the same consequences) to be yourself. By the time this is printed, you'll be out, so we don't want to see you here again!

Another Mistake

Twelve years old, caught stealing

Another mistake

Got F's in school

Another mistake

Stole some girl's cell phone

Another mistake

Went to a group home and ran

Another mistake

Came back home and snuck out

Another mistake

Met Lamar and got pregnant

Another mistake

Gave birth to Lamar, Jr.

The best mistake

I know I've made many mistakes and I still will. I'm not perfect. But each mistake has made me stronger and smarter. I've also grown very mature. My family hates 'cause I've made these choices, but I look at life like this: everything happens for a reason, and it does. To my family, all my life will be is another mistake.

-A Young Mom

From The Beat: Whether your family sees the mature and responsible young woman you are becoming or not, we do — and you do! Don't give up on your family, either. Maybe they just need some convincing by watching how and what you do from this point on. We have faith in you, and we know you can do it!

Change

When I woke up this morning I was thinking if I get out of this place I should change my life. I think I should 'cause I don't want my parents worrying about me. I can't get no money if I can't get out this place to get a job.

-Kevin

From The Beat: What this piece tells us, Kevin, is that you are thinking, and thinking is the beginning of change. So you don't have to wait till you get out of this place to change your life. You've already begun. Just follow through.

My Ticket Out

Well, my ticket out is to make a whole lot of money. I dream that one day this Lil' Homie can leave the 'hood, but it is very hard to get out due to the problems with the people and the police. There's a lot of things I must do to escape the harsh life I live, but for right now this just what I need to do. The big homies always say, "Lil' Homie, you got what it take. But you don't need this way of life. It's way too hard."

My mother said, "You will regret this shhh you're doing!" But I still love it. The game is my way out.

-D-Boy

From The Beat: How many young men can you count who thought the game was their ticket out — and in a way it was, because they're no longer in the world at all! Do you think you are smarter than all of them? Why do you think the older homies are telling you not to follow the path you're on? Do you think you are smarter than they are? What do you think you're doing to your mother when you decide that what you want to do is more important than her? Here you are, locked up in a cage, answering to strangers who tell you when to sleep, eat, pee, and speak; here you are wearing some other boy's underwear, and yet you're talking about "the game is my way out." So you can ignore what's right in front of your face if you want — you can pretend your future will be different — but to us and anyone with the ability to see and think, the game is clearly your way in...

What Makes Me Smile

Well, it's me, Dreamer again, Beat. I'm out on the first of September, so this is the last time.

What makes me smile is the sense of my family. I get a smile on my face when I go to sleep and look out my window, telling God thank you for today's date. I have a smile right now because everything is going so well. I'm glad to hear good news. I'm glad my mom is always by my side.

What makes my smile disappear is when I start to cry. But I'll always try to not make my smile disappear.

- Dreamer

From The Beat: Well, you're probably not able to read this, La Dreamer, because you're out! What will make us smile is to see you move forward with your life in a way that keeps you safe and free. What would make us cry is to see you coming back to this place!

Good-Bye Smiles

I am 17 years old and I started at age 16 to ruin everything I had. I started to sneak out with friends. We would walk around our neighborhood and drink beer or whatever we had. We also started to break into cars and steal stupid things. What we were looking for was cigarettes and beer.

Well, we finally stole more and more and broke into stores and houses. After a while we got caught. I got put on probation. After like a few months, I started to smoke meth. It was weird and kinda scary. I got caught by a dirty piss test. The guy who tested me asked me what I was dirty with and I told him it was meth.

When I told my parents, my mom would not talk to me. I stopped eating and talking to anyone. My girl and my friends were all worried about me. After two months my mom started to talk to me. Every time I see her I lose my smile because I know what I did to her and how I failed her.

-Joey

From The Beat: It's really too bad that you started down this path, Joey. We hope you know that the mistakes you made aren't that you "finally stole more and more..." but that you stole anything at all. Do you see that it was wrong from the first time you did it? If so, what made you see that? If not, how do you see it now? As for the meth, there is nothing we can say that you don't already know, except that there is nothing good that can come from using that deadly drug. We keep thinking of a wonderful friend we have now doing four life sentences in state prison because he thought he could take just a little meth to get all his work done. A little led to a lot, as it always does. So we hope you build on the foundation of sobriety that you've laid down here so that you'll be able to approach your problems with a clear head, and not add another layer of problems on top. If you know what you did to your mom, then you also know what you have to do now for your mom... and for yourself.

I Want Out

Hopefully the EMP officer hurry up and come get me. I've been sittin' here waitin' for him to come or for them to come get me so I can get the hell out of this weak-ass hall that tries to make it look like they care so much, but they really don't give a shhh 'bout us. They just want to lock us up as much and any time they can.

But I'm out. I'm getting' tired of writing, so ma two ninjas from the G keep it solid.

-M Dre

From The Beat: Since you know "they" don't care about you and "they" want to give you time, why do YOU give them the opportunity they need to carry out their wishes? Since you can't change the system ("them"), why not work on changing yourself so you don't have to be either here or on EMP, and instead can be free? What do you mean when you tell your homies to "keep it solid"? If it means to keep living the kind of life that leads to consequences like this (and worse), then your writing a prescription for your future that you are going to want to blame others for bringing about.

An Interview Between Friends

La Gorda: I'm here, reminiscing on my past.
 La Dreamer: Right, do you remember when we used to live together?
 G: Yeah, the truth is, if it weren't for you, who knows where I would be.
 D: Well, what are your homegirls for? I do favors for you and you don't owe me anything. Everything comes from my heart. True homegirl love, right?
 G: You are always in my heart for life, homegirl, and you are never left back.
 D: All right, it's all good, Gorda. You read my mind all the time. You are number one and you are never left back.
 G: All right then, I hope that sisters know the true love that I have for you. Keep your heads up high.

-La Dreamer And Gorda

From The Beat: The same way both of you are talking to each other right now, is the same way we hope you two help each other out to maintain yourselves way from jails when you two are back on the outs. Do you two believe you can do this for each other? We wish both of you the best of luck.

Happily Ever After

I'm getting out in late August and I'm not going to come back ever again. I'm going to get a job and stay out of trouble by playing sports and live happily ever after.

-Terrence

From The Beat: We worry when we read young people say they're going to live happily ever after 'cause there is no such thing. Life has its difficulties even if you're making all your money legit and doing it big. At the same time, we applaud your determination never to come back, to get a job, and to play sports. We wish you nothing but good luck!

First Day Out

I'll be getting out tomorrow. I think the first thing I'm going to do is probably sit down and talk to my moms. Honestly I don't know what I'm going to do. Hopefully I can stay out of Hillcrest. Gone.

-Twin

From The Beat: Well, congratulations on getting out! We hope you did sit down and talk to your mother, because she's gained some wisdom in the years she's lived. Not know what you're going to do is not such a bad thing — if you know what you're not going to do... Hoping to stay out of Hillcrest won't keep you out. It's what you do, and not what you wish for, that will accomplish that goal! Good luck.

Ups And Downs

My life has too many ups and downs. It's probably because I'm in here or outside of the hall or in the streets doing what I'm doing to stay up. Going here and there to keep me from doing from what I do just by smoking blunt after blunt.

-The Unknown

From The Beat: Smoking blunt after blunt is almost the definition of "ups and downs." The problem is that your "ups" are short-term and chemically induced, making your "downs" all the more difficult to crawl out of. Maybe it's time to develop another strategy... one that works for you.

This Disappointed

My biggest disappointment in life was a snitch. He was my closest friend and we were in business together. I had a lot of money and happily spent some on my friends. Money came with the business I was in so I wasn't trippin'.

My partner wanted to commit my crime of choice with me. Everything worked out fine, like it always does, but later my friend got caught and snitched. He testified against me so he wouldn't even get in trouble.

-Grinch

From The Beat: Sorry to say, but we're not feeling sorry for you or the fact that you "closest friend" snitched on you. Do you know why? Because you chose both your friend and your crime. So, the way we see it, it's all on you. You consider yourself your own biggest disappointment.

Great Disappointment

What's up wit' it, Beat? My greatest disappointment is that I keep making the same mistakes. My first charge was bringing a weapon to school and pulling it out on someone. My second one was for another weapon at school.

I stayed out of juvi after I did my time and I said that I wasn't going to come back for reals. I stayed out like two months. I started kickin' it wit' some homies a little more and got in a stolo wit' 'em. If I knew where we was going I wouldn't've got in. We got caught. They got me for auto theft and I never even drove it.

But anyway, when we got to the station they let me go 'cause the driver took the blame. I had court and right after court I was driving another stolo. Yup, I got caught in that one too. See, I keep making the same mistakes.

Maybe camp will help me. My dad don't even tell me nothin'. Well, I'll find help. I'm growing up so I gotta change, ya feel me? I gotta make dat money and stop playing lil' kid shhhh. I'll get out and calm down wit' the females. I'm the only one in my family that's doing time, but if I can't do it I won't do the crime.

This is probably my last writing. Well, I'll try to keep it coo'. Keep yo' head up. I'm out then...later.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: You say you hope camp will help you, but what is the help you're looking for? Surely you know that it's not only against the law to steal a car (and if you're in one, you're as guilty as the driver), but it's also wrong. (We don't think you'd approve if someone stole a car that you paid your own money to buy.) So, what's the help you need to make you stop doing what you already know to stop doing? If the "time" you had to do was a year, would that stop you? Five years? A lifetime?

Maintain

Baby don't cry
 You gotta keep your head up
 Even when the rough times come
 Never give up

Let me tell you something.
 Life gets hard a lot of times
 Pero stay strong
 Gotta keep your head up
 Gotta keep it trucha.

Don't let no vato or jaina
 Que te aguitas (make you feel bad)
 'Cause they putting you down
 Trying to keep you down
 'Cause you strong and standing tall

Keep it trucha
 Stay strong
 Never give up
 And keep your head up high

-Morenita

From The Beat: What is "it" that you're urging to stay trucha to or for? If it's a color or a set, then we think your "side" is the same as the "other" who are urging their own to keep it trucha. If we could urge one thing on you, Morenita, it would be to become your own person, to break the chains that hold you to accept someone else's enemies (or friends) as your own without exercising your own, independent judgment. We have little respect for the gang (we have little respect for any army of men and women, even the U.S. Army) that simply does a job it's told to do, without the individual thinking for himself or herself. Although we understand what the gang does to make you feel a part of something, it is you that we value, and it is you that we urge you to value!

Royal's Out!

What's up Beat? Ya boy Young Royal has been locked down, but I'm back. Unfortunately for y'all — but fortunately for me — I'm out soon.

I just wanna say to everybody stay up 'cause it's a light at the end of the tunnel. I just did a year, so if I can do a year, y'all can do six months. Just keep prayin'! And to the ladies, stay up and don't give up on yourself. All right then, I'm out!

-Young Royal

From The Beat: You probably won't be reading this, Young Royal, but we want to thank you anyway for always making us think, for challenging us, and for keeping it real on these pages (even when it was too real to print). But for all who are reading this, we want to remind you that doing a year inside is hard enough, but the real test of how hard you are (and how much self-discipline you have) is whether you can do a year out there! We're pulling for you for that kind of success.

The Word Hate

Hate is a strong word
 It's hated when it's heard
 But it's constantly generatin'
 Sometimes concentratin'
 And always hatin'
 Never waitin'
 To do some segregatin'
 Never early, never late
 It's one of the hardest things to
 escape
 Passed down from generation to
 generation

Hate is passed down with
 discrimination
 It's never fate
 To hand out hate
 Or even to receive it
 If you feel it you have been deceived
 And that's what it is
 It's a feeling of sealing an open door
 It's a feeling that's killing our core

-Jesse

From The Beat: You are a first-rate thinker and writer, Jesse. You continually impress us with how you are able to take our topics and turn them into meaningful poems that speak to larger issues. Trying to escape the prejudices of our parents is truly a difficult task, and maybe none of us fully succeed. But to recognize that hate is taught and passed down is the beginning of breaking that cycle, and the measure that you are thinking for yourself.

Stronger

You told me family will be by your side until the end of time, and now I'm on the streets outside. I'm three months pregnant. I thought I wouldn't be able to do it. But I've grown stronger. I'm getting my life together. I used to always cry. Now I'm all smiles. I'm doing great in school with a seven-month old child. I don't have you guys for support, but guess what? I don't need it. I'm not weak anymore cause I've grown stronger.

-A Young Mom

From The Beat: We're glad you're stronger than you were, and stronger than you thought you could be. But every young mother needs as much help as she can get from as many people as she can get it from, so don't be too proud to ask for help. Our question is this: How can you have a child, get pregnant again, then allow yourself to get locked up? How is that being strong? You know how to prevent pregnancy, and you know you can't be the mother you want to be while someone else is taking care of your child. A good mother needs more than strength. She also needs to be responsible.

In Loving Memory

Hey Mijo. How's it been up there in the heavens up above? Me aguito (it's sad) just thinking about the times we shared. I remember the one day you took care of me, el dia que El Cyclone se paso de lansa (the day Cyclone tried to hurt me). I was crying and you was holding me tight saying I was gonna be all right. So mad you was, you wanted to beat Cyclone for what he did to me. Thanks homie por ser mi angelito (for being my little angel) watching over me.

I still remember when my prima called ma and told me you got shot in the head while walking home from school. I broke down crying that day. You were taken away by God. And now I only have you in my heart, always gonna be in my heart. Te extraño (I miss you). Much love and respect.

-Morenita
From The Beat: This sounds like a terribly tragic situation. Could it have been avoided? Has it changed anything about how you want to live your life?

Why should I Care?

Should I care about you
 Even though you don't care about me
 Should I care about somebody
 Who wasn't there for me?
 Tell me why I should care
 When you treated me so bad
 Should I care if you pass and die?
 You'll probably think I'll care
 But guess what
 I won't care if you die

-Morenita
From The Beat: You may have all the reasons in the world to feel the way you do, Morenita, but the problem with such passionate hate is that it can eat you up from the inside — and never touch the object of your hate. We hope you can let this go so you can heal and get on with your life.

Not A Criminal

You say I'm a criminal so I take it.
 Tenemos mentes criminales (We have criminal minds)
 Looking for crimes to do.
 You say I'm a criminal so I take it,
 I don't see it but I take it,
 I ain't no criminal.
 Tal vez tengo la mente de un criminal (I might have the mind of a criminal)
 But deep inside no soy un criminal (I am not a criminal)
 It's just what people say

-Morenita
From The Beat: Okay, you've done a good job of telling us what you are not. Now, tell us what you are...

Big Disappointment

A big disappointment in life was the day I was at the wrong place at the wrong time. The reason is because I got on probation. I could have been a little smarter, even though I probably would have gotten probation even if I wasn't there.

When I think about my past I see a lot of my fun. I've been to the randomest places. The memories I see most are my actions that I never think through. Some are good and some are bad. The good ones are the fun ones and the bad ones are just the ones that are just bad. I only have a little bit of bad ones 'cause I'll say one out of 100 I regret the things I do.

The person I am today I like. What made me like this is the way I think, what I enjoy to do and well, that's it. Something I always took with me though was my self-respect. And that's still with me. I see myself making worse decisions when I get out and I'm like, "Think smarter or slicker."

I want to choose a good path but I've made a decision that is nowhere near good. My goal I hope to reach is to own my own business 'cause I see a lot of money in having a business. But for now I will just try to think before I do something because I don't really know where I'ma end up.

-Nani
From The Beat: Of course you don't know where you will end up. No one does. But when you tell us that you you've made a decision about the path you plan to walk "that is nowhere near good," where do you think you'll end up? Hoping for a good goal, like your own business, won't get it for you. That requires education, dedication, self-discipline and hard work. We hope you will try to develop these qualities before you pay a very high price for the choices you sound like you are planning to make.

Why?

Why gangs? That's a question almost everyone asks. People look at gangs as a sign of protection. They also look at gangs as a way to become cool with a bunch of new homeboys or homegirls that will have your back when someone decides to mess with you.

It brings laughter to mind when you hear someone talk about the homeboys and homegirls in their gang that are so close to them because those are the same homeboys and homegirls that beat you up just so you can be in that gang while you sat there and took the pain. So before you enter a gang think about it.

I didn't. Now look at me. I'm dreading the day I get out because that will be the day I get beat up to be free. Now I get a chance to escape the horror. I luckily haven't been harmed yet. Because a lot of gang members can find themselves in horrible situations, death being one of them.

-Lady P
From The Beat: Thinking about the consequences is not something that children do naturally. But experience teaches them to think before they act, and that is called maturity. The choices you made in the past can definitely affect your future, sometimes for the good and sometimes for the bad. But the choices you make today are the ones that truly count. Choose wisely.

Disappointments

You've disappointed me too many times
 Time and time over again I believed you

You've disappointed me
 I took you to the top
 You brought me down
 Disappointed...

I tried to have positive thoughts and actions

Disappointed again...

I try not to give up on you
 Disappointed again by you
 Do you know who you are?

You are me!

Disappointed for the last time
 I won't let you disappoint us no more

-Phenomenal Woman
From The Beat: By writing this, you haven't disappointed us! Now, take some time to examine the decisions you've made that have led to your disappointments, and then think of what you must do — as hard as it might be to do it — in order to keep that wonderful promise of your last line. We have faith in you. Do you?

Biggest Disappointment

My biggest disappointment was when my mom found out that I got locked up. I felt messed up that I have let my parents down. They trusted me. And now I have to earn all that trust again. It's going to be hard, but that's something that I'm willing to do again.

-Yadara Mean Me
From The Beat: What we want to know is this: If your mom never found out about your crime, would you have been disappointed in yourself? What is more disappointing, the fact that you did whatever it was that let the system take control of you, or the fact that your mom found out about it?

Stranger

I'm a stranger to many,
 But I'm really known
 To all my homies.
 Way back home

I'm the jaina you don't trust
 I'm the one that lies.
 I'll lie to you.
 I don't care how you feel.

I'm a stranger to mi familia
 'Cause they can't see me grow up
 I think of how I'm hurting them
 And it makes me cry.

I'm a stranger in jail,
 Sitting in this damn cell
 Saying to myself, what is this feeling
 I've never ever felt

-Morenita
From The Beat: Are you also a stranger to yourself? Or do you know who you are and who you want to be? If you're not satisfied with the person you see, then what do you want or plan to do to change?

Hurt

Many days I've hurt myself time and time again

I know of what I do, why do I still hurt inside

Living life in the past will get you nowhere
 Don't ever tell the one you love or say you love

"If you love me you would do it"
 How about this?

Love will do it out of one's actions, and not out of force!

Don't ever think your lady or man is hurting you

You hurt yourself by sticking around
 Let it go and let it come back

Expectation leads to depression
 Let this just be a lesson

RIP Karl B

I miss and love you!

-Goddess Of Fortune
From The Beat: We're not sure we understand all of this, GOF, but if you're saying that staying in a relationship that is hurtful only hurts you more, we agree. When you say that expectations lead to depression, we know you are speaking of your own experience, and that is a sad thing because some expectations — finishing school, for example, or finding work that you enjoy doing — can lead to great happiness. Tell us about Karl and why you miss and love him — and what happened to him.

Defining Hate

Yes you can hate someone you don't know. Hate can come from generations. It's passed on. For example: Family. You can be brought up a certain way. Being a lil' kid, you can have somebody telling you to hate certain people. You don't need to know them.

I hate certain people. They have the same certain characteristics that I don't like. I'm very different from them. I hate them. Sometimes people switch too. They hate someone then they don't, and most of the time when I see this happen, that person has it all bad because they switched.

But if, if I hate someone, I know why I hate them and that's enough for me. I just take one look and I know if I'm gonna like the person or not and sometimes I already hate the person in my heart.

-Nani
From The Beat: So there are people you hate by sight alone? Books that you judge by their covers? We bet you also hate it when the DA or judge looks at you and makes judgments about who you are without even knowing you, so how can you justify doing the same to others? Do you ever hate yourself? Why or why not?

RIP

It's been more than a year now that you left us, went up above to heaven to watch over us. Now I sit here reminiscin' 'bout you, Lil' Huero, and the firme times we spent, knowing that you by our side, looking over us. I still remember that night when I got that phone call telling me you got shot and died. I got to my knees and started to cry, saying, "Lord, why you got to take this from me?"

I want to say "Thank you" for believing in me and giving me hope to not take my life. You were one of the vatos that really cared. Now I take every day as my last 'cause I don't know when I'm a die and pass. The times I spent with you were some of my best, so nunca los olvidare (I'll never forget them).

Now you don't got to be watching your back all the time. Chale, now we have your soul living within us. Damn, Mijo, te extraño (I miss you). I love you. Rest in Peace.

In loving memory of Victor B., "Lil' Huero," sunset, August 22, 2005.

-Morenita

From The Beat: Morenita: You gave us eight pieces of writing, which is too many for us to use in one issue. But more important than that, some of what you wrote is just not appropriate for The Beat. We respect your sad but loving RIP to Lil' Huero, but we couldn't print most of it because you still insist on holding up your gang colors and glorifying the battles with "enemies." Those so-called enemies also write for The Beat and we know them as individuals, not as better or worse than you. We think of them as we think of you, people for whom we must and do have equal respect as human beings. Therefore, we can't just allow you to use our pages to perpetuate the hates you were taught to have, the prejudices you hold so dear to your heart. In a way, the same is true of the tragic piece you wrote called "Suicide." You are so "down" for your set, that you find it almost impossible to separate issues that are universally important — like self-hatred and hopelessness, that passing desire to leave the world — from issues that are important only to you and to the "group" that you want to define your identity. We wish we could make you see how valuable you are as an individual, and not as a label, but that is for you to discover on your own. All we can do is hold to our standards, and not allow you to promote those gang identities and "values" which continue to lead to so much violence and death. This publication belongs to everyone in these desperate streets, and we can't and won't permit you, or anyone, to glorify that violence in the name of "respect" or to demonstrate that you are "down to ride." We hope you can understand and respect us.)

Why Is Your Life Worth Living

My life is worth living for myself because I have plans for my future. I wanna go to college and for cosmetology, become a hairdresser and open up my own shop. My life is worth living for my daughter, and her father because they both miss me and love me. I cant wait to get to see them, but I cant wait to see my lil' girl. She seven years old and hella pretty. And I can't wait to see my baby, Wayne. He takin' care of our child right now. I miss them.

-Kabanni

From The Beat: Having a child should change a whole lot in your life, Kabanni. Now it's time for you to make the sacrifices that every mother (who is worth the title "Mother") must make for her children. It's time to put behind you the things that led you here, even the things you like doing, because now you are engaged in the most important job there is, being a mother. Your goals of getting your cosmetology license and opening your own shop are achievable if you apply yourself and avoid the temptations of the past. Take it one day at a time, and keep walking forward!

Biggest Disappointment: Coming Back Here

My biggest disappointment in life was when I told my mom that I was never going to end up in the hall ever again. And the next thing you know I was in admissions. That was the biggest disappointment in my life because the person that I disappointed the most was my mom.

-Silent

From The Beat: We're sure your mom was disappointed, but weren't you disappointed in yourself? Was it a surprise to you that you came back? Or, to ask that question another way, did you do something that gave power to the system to take you from your mom and put you here? If so, then being here shouldn't be that much of a surprise.

A Young Homie

Damn, this homie right here got me trippin' a little. He got a kid already and he just fifteen. He's been here for more than a year, and I don't know if he knows wha's waiting for him in the outs.

He has a kid he has not yet met, and a father role to play, when I don't believe he knows exactly how to be. I know he's proud of his baby, and really wants to be part of his life. Who knows how old that kid is gonna be when he finally gets to meet his daddy. But I really hope it works out.

Ey, Homie, you eva need any help, call up your carnalita right here. But please stay in that kid's life.

-Morenita

From The Beat: This is another sad story we see repeated week after week in these pages. You wonder when this new child will get to see his daddy, but the way we look at it, that child doesn't have a daddy. The child that created this child wasn't thinking of the child he was creating or of what it means to be a father when he did it. He was thinking of himself, which tells us only what is obvious: He is still a child himself! Any boy past the age of twelve can make a baby, but that doesn't make him a daddy. That requires so much more, and that is why we hate it when we read of these new babies being created to continue the patters that put so many young people away. When it's so easy to prevent pregnancy these days (much more so than in your parents' generation), why do you think so few young people take advantage of those ways? What do you think it will take to break this cycle?

Addy

I miss you so much. I'm waiting for the day we are back together. I hope I get out soon but damn, this place sucks and so does the food. But I hope our kid isn't born without me. I really want to be there when the kid's born.

I know that times are hard because I'm not there with you right now and I'm sorry for messing up and getting locked up. I miss all the good times we had, but just remember what we had. It makes me feel happy thinking about the good times we have had and I hope it does the same for you too. But please stay strong and don't stress. It will be bad for the kid. Just think of the good times we had.

-Looney

From The Beat: To us, the most promising line in this sad (but hopeful) piece is the one that says: "I'm sorry for messing up and getting locked up." By creating a child but not thinking of your creation, you were not acting like a responsible man (which is a requirement for fatherhood), but like a self-centered child (which is an ingredient for baby-makinghood...) It looks like you've done a lot of thinking and a lot of growing because of this experience. If it took this to make you see what you must now do to live up to your responsibilities, then it will be worth it. Good luck.

My Greatest Disappointment

I think it's no surprise to my family that I have "sticky fingers." Well that's one reason that I'm in here. It all started when I started smoking pot. I started to rely on the drug so I started to steal stuff and sell it for money.

The biggest mistake I made was I stole my dad's eight thousand plus dollar watch. Well, he eventually found out and he was very disappointed. He decided to press charges against me, so I ran away. I was on the run for six months until I turned myself in for burglary. Currently he isn't speaking to me and isn't supportive of my case.

-Adrian

From The Beat: So, for the cost of \$8500, you sold your self-respect. Was it worth it? We know you'll answer, "No," so that's not a real question. The real question is how will you deal with your addiction or addictions so that you won't need to have sticky fingers in the future (cause sticky fingers lead to even stickier situations, like getting yourself locked up). And even more important, you won't put your brain under the control of some external substance that messes up your thinking so you do things you wouldn't do if you were thinking clearly.

Hate

Can you hate someone as much as Pac hated Big?
Do you got enough hate to go to Iraq killin' kids?
You hatin' the DA and judge for the things that you did

Come on young homies, open yo' eyes
Yeah, you can shoot a gun so what? You want a prize?

The things you do now will come back to you later
Why you hatin' someone you don't know?

Ain't that called a hater?

It ain't supposed to be haters in the game

Don't think it ain't the same

Hatin' somebody you don't know

And even if you do, you got sworn into the game, so you supposed to stay true

Now back to hatin' for your crimes

How do you hate someone else over your mistakes?

Stop doin' what you doin', that's all it takes

For you not to come back and you won't have to hate

And stop using statistics as an excuse

It's libraries in every 'hood

Put them books to use!

If you wanna hate somebody, hate yasef!

Do something positive, ask for help

Get at yo' boy!

-Young Royal

From The Beat: It's writing like this that make us miss Young Royal already. The advice he spits here is worth everyone's time to read and consider. This youngster has turned into a man. There are still all kinds of traps out there, but he's prepared his mind to deal with them as best he can, and we're all behind him. Keep striding forward, Young Royal!

A Hero

I looked at Martin Luther King because he made the world today for blacks, whites and hispanics to work together and to have kids together.

When they got together and Martin Luther King said, we will not fight back, we will march. Amen. RIP MLK

-Lil' Miami The King

From The Beat: He was an important part of the work, and now you are the next generation, you are the hope to continue his struggle? What can we do to help you make that struggle?

If I Could Get Away

What it do Beat? This is ya' boy Lil' Gary still in Juvenile Hall and it's my twenty-second day. I'm going through a lot in here, but I'm ready to get out and make a change.

What I want to do is take a vacation to Miami and just get away from California. There I would just kick it on the beach with a few females. Probably stay in a fancy hotel. Go swimming everyday and just give myself time to think. If there was one person I could bring with me I would bring my mother, there she could rest and just have a good time.

Anyway I'm gone get at you later.

-Lil' Gary

From The Beat: That sounds like a nice getaway. What kind of things would you think about? It's probably a good idea to use this time in the Hall as a time to think (what else can you do?) and get your life straight. Vacations come after hard work. Are you willing to work hard for it?

Good Lives, Bad Lives

Life. Some people live bad lives and some people live good lives. But to live good lives you got to thrive, to live good. But some people do good and still live bad lives but look at it this way, everybody lived good lives it wouldn't be the same, because there wouldn't be anyone to share your wealth with or to rub it into because everyone would be wealthy and married.

But always remember that life might go all-bad at one point. Then if you stay strong and it might just turn around and it just might all piece together, and you might be the one that runs out victorious with a great life.

Remember this is all part of life.

-Drew

From The Beat: Good point, you really made us think by taking this position. On the other hand, maybe if everyone lived good lives they wouldn't need to make themselves feel better by focusing on other people's misery...are you saying that it's hard to be happy if there isn't unhappiness around to compare yourself to?

God

My life is worth living because of God. I think it's God, because if it wasn't for Him we wouldn't be here. The other thing is that he died for my sins. So it motivates me to keep going and never give up.

-Lil' Grine

From The Beat: Keep going for what? Do you think that you are living your life according to what God created you for? Our Free will is a dangerous thing. It can get us into trouble or it can help us discover meaning in our lives. If you are living for God, what is the purpose of your life?

Life

It's hard this world,
Growin' up with a gun
Thrown at you like, "What it do?"
You got ninjas lying in yo' face,
Spittin' them words like mace,
Pretending they yo' friend
Until the cops pull and point the finger at you.
And they can get away scott free.

Now you on the run.

On top of that you can have no real fun
Because you got to look over your back
Every time you hit the block 'cause
You afraid of getting' caught.

But you would snitch

Because you afraid of yo' so called friends
Lookin' at you
Like what it do.

-Leon

From The Beat: It is very hard to find people in this world to trust, particularly out in the streets when the stakes are so very high. We have heard many young people getting burned by their so-called friends and all we can say is it happens and it's a lesson we all have to learn. When you are young, you don't realize how much time you have and just how quickly that time can get away from you. Don't waste your time with people who are just living for the moment.

Mothers

It pains me to see the mothers of my homeboys that passed away

crying at their funeral. I wouldn't like my mom to see me dead in a casket. Well Beat that's it for now.

-Mousie

From The Beat: We always wonder how it is that a young man or woman can talk about the pain of having to go to the funeral of a young homie and in the same breath talk about wanting to eliminate the enemy that did it. When you take someone's life there is a ripple effect - you are taking a son, a possible father, a cousin, a grandson, a best friend and so much more.

Why Is Life Worth Living?

Life is worth living to me because I was put here for a reason to live my life to the fullest, for my family and for myself. I want to live my life good until it is my time to go. But when I die, hopefully it is my time and not no time before.

I'm living because I wanna be with my family and soon start my own family. I'm living life cause my life has been good to me and the block. But I'm on my way to camp in two weeks, so I'm outta here fast like a Nascar.

-Roland

From The Beat: Roland, what gives your life meaning? The Block? Your family? Is your life headed down a path that you will be proud of? What kind of things do you want to accomplish in your lifetime? If you're going to have a family, what family values will you teach your children?

Time Is Not The End of The World

Man, I'm still in this weak ass shhh waiting. I been here for a minute, for about a month. I hollered at my PO today, she is working on trying to get me to ROP fast so I can start my time. I want to get my program over so I can get back to my kids, all three of them.

-Jamarr

From The Beat: We wish you the best in getting through these times coming up - and don't forget that Positive Minds is waiting for you at the Mentoring Center.

God Gave It to Me

Life is worth living because God gave it to me. My life ain't all that great but I have good health. I am proud of my mental state of mind.

Life is also worth living because I have a wonderful family and the best girl that God could give me.

-Booka

From The Beat: Tell us more! About your family, your mom, your girl, your mental state. This could be the beginning of a great piece.

My Poem

I love being your friend and lover, doing little things to brighten your life and watching you burst into a warm smile that says "Thank you for being you!"

But what I like most is how you and I have fallen in love. There are no demands, no using each other, just letting those wonderful feelings continue to grow...

And in return, finding that being friends and lover at the same time is a rich and rewarding experience.

-G-Money

From The Beat: Keep writing, and tell us what is so rewarding about being a friend and lover to someone.

What Up

What up with it Beat? It's your boy Vee just wanted to say what up to all. Keep your head up, from your boy Lil' Vee.

-Lil' Vee

From The Beat: What's up back to you? Ready to get up out of jail? Ready to go to school? Ready to do right? Hope so.

Won't Give Up

What keeps me going is my family. I know they won't give up on me, so I won't give up on them. Also because I got people who look up to me like my little brothers or cousins. And I know they're strong like I am and to keep their head up like the rest of my family. Also my friends and knowing Jesus loves me and a lot of other people.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: If you've got family members who look up to you, you better keep going, but in another direction. What do you think your little brothers think of their big brother locked up in the Hall? Get your life together. Not just for yourself, but for them. You have a responsibility. You can do it, make them, yourself and us proud!

Free Me

The police are always with me
Free me

I want to be free

I want to see my beezy

Free me

I want to go home

I wanna eat mayonnaise

I would like to be free

I like to pee when I have to

I don't like to be in max unit

Free me

-Lil' Marquis

From The Beat: Chains can be physical and mental. This poem is a strong and powerful announcement of your desire to free your body, but what about freeing your mind? Is your mind free?

It Pains Me

It pains me to see my age go to waste
It pains me to see and watch the blood on the street
paste
Why must I wait and watch the days pass
How long will I wait to stay in first just to come in
last?
The place I live isn't the place I wanna stay
Even though the money comes
Days go by slow and weeks go by fast
I wait watch and see how long I will last
I think don't let me die for nothing
Let me stay and live for something
Blood runs down my face
Because tears don't last a day
So I live for the most
And watch my days fade away
God gives me good
And keeps me safe
But I must continue to fight to win.

-Boy

From The Beat: What are you fighting for? What will you win? Surely we will all pass on day, but when that day comes, will you be proud of what you've accomplished? What are you living for?

Dear Beat

I'm not writing y'all no more 'cause y'all ain't solid. I write all the time and never see my pieces in The Beat, so y'all can boss up! Straight up, y'all got me twisted on the real, but y'all hella boosty—it's like that?

-Shyla

From The Beat: Oh really, it's like that? Well we're glad you've ended the relationship on such a positive note. Here's an idea, why don't you stop complaining about a program in the hall and just stay out of jail so you don't have to be pissed at us. Or maybe there are bigger things to be pissed at but it's easier to be mad at The Beat. If that's so, go ahead and hate on us. We can take it.

Comfort Jones

My comfort zone is in the arms of my dude, he always makes me feel good, feel comfortable, feel relaxed by just being hugged up with him. When I'm angry or sad he holds me and tells me he loves me and I forget for that moment what I was angry about. Maybe because it's like being cradled to sleep by my mother as a baby. Or maybe it reminds me of my blanket wrapped around me, on my way to sleep, makes me feel so warm inside. It makes me feel like I have no worries, takes away my pain.

Dedicated to my dude.

-La La

From The Beat: It's always a good feeling to have someone there, loving you. But why are you calling him your daddy? We know it's a figure of speech, but you need to learn how to be a woman who has a man who is her equal.

My Comfort Zone

Me, I find my comfort zone through my one and only Baby Boo. My man is the only one that fully understands me and understands what I go through. Mi Vida is crazy and he's the only one that is really there for me, to listen to me, to feel for me and ride with me. I hope he forever stays as my Boo. But one thing is for sure, he will always be my closest homie. I ride for him and I will die for him and he is my number one comfort zone. Baby I miss you crazy much. Have things ready for me when I get out. Love you baby. Be out soon!

-M-Girl

From The Beat: Sounds like you're right on track, M-Girl. With a name, which we took out, like that and a man like that, what could possibly go wrong? Get serious girl. Do you want to spend the rest of your life riding for someone else, going around with a name that brags about horrible and senseless violence? Are you okay with that? You think you're powerful like that and it won't come back to haunt you. We think you're wrong. We know it will haunt you for the rest of your days. Wake up and stop being the fool!

Greatest Love

I was lost
But now
I found the greatest love
That saved me from
The force so glad
You came around
To see what's best for you is me
Boy you make me feel so right
Baby you give me the will
To carry on, you're my everything
Nothing's gonna stop us now 'cause
Baby you're my everything

-Precious Love

From The Beat: That sounds an awful lot like song lyrics. Did you write them yourself or take it from a favorite song? In any case, there is a message there, and we think it's that as long as you have real love in your life, and we mean real in the sense that no matter what happens, that person will be there for you - when you have that, you can overcome many obstacles. Congratulations if you believe you've really found that. We hope you won't be disappointed.

Free Me

They need to free me
I need to see the outs Beat
The DA tryna do me
I been in here too damn long
I need to get out and be wit' my girl
Then run the world
'Cause that's how I see it
I go dumb all day
'Cause that's what I do
I'm tryna get out of here
And ride on 225
Reserve me from these
Deadly streets, 'cause when I get out it's over ya'
see
Free me so I can do what it do
Feel me
I'm a eat. Watch and see.
RIP Lil' C.

-Lil' Suave

From The Beat: "I'm a eat." Yes, you'll eat. But the question is will you be eating good burgers on a cool summer night, and fresh sushi on the coast of Japan, and spicy tortillas on a Mexican beach - i.e. will that menu be rich and varied and tasty and interesting, the way life should be? Or would you just be eating overcooked county food, dry and boring and predictable, the way life shouldn't be. Work the metaphor, and tell us what you really want to eat, and how you plan on getting it to the Lil' Suave table.

Being Solid

Man to me being solid is staying true to yourself first and your friends second. Also you need to be ready to ride or die for whatever. And when it's time to squad up do it with no questions asked. And when it's time to hit a lic make sure you strip them out everything even their socks 'cause that's how you do it.

-Portia

From The Beat: How very enlightening. If being true to yourself and who you are is about robbing and stealing and licking, than you should think long and hard about who you really are as a person and what you want to be. Wake up!

Me and Mine

-Messy Marv

From The Beat: Here you are incarcerated, bragging about being a fool. It's time to realize the way you handled things was not cool - so you can make incarceration a permanent home or a school. Learn your lesson or remain a slave in the penal system.

This Pain

The pain that I feel in my life is not like any pain I have ever felt before. My older sister told me it's a thing called love. I thought I knew what love was but I guess I did not 'till I came here. I'm so deeply in love that I have to cry myself to sleep because I'm longing to be next to this person—fall asleep next to and wake up to and all this time I never knew how much in love I was with this man. Now that I can't be with him I realize this pain hurts!!

-D Baby

From The Beat: Love is a powerful thing. Do you think he is also crying because you're gone right now? We hope you are both on the same page.

Comfortable In The Hood

What it do Beat? This yo' boy, Lil' Juanito coming at y'all one time, mang. Well, I don't have to create a comfort zone 'cause I already have one. It's in my neighborhood that I always feel secure.

I'm so used to my surroundings that I can walk around with my eyes closed and never get lost. You can also count on a handful of loved ones to assist you in any ordeal that just happens to pop up. I get a big-ass, kool-aid smile every time I get out of jail and walk through them rugged streets.

Like I've said, it's a sense of security that attracts me to my comfort zone. But if you ain't from around there, I'd advise you to keep out — or someone's momma gonna be shopping fo' a black dress.

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: What a sad ending to your piece! That aside, we beg you to distinguish between a sense of security and its reality. Your handful of loved ones can't keep you out of prison, not in the long run, and you know that now. In fact, they'll lead you into the very trouble that will land you there. Your other nickname, Troublesum is a cool sounding nickname, but the consequences are nothing you really want to claim.

What It Do

First, allow me to send my love to all in "torcido". This is Lil' Krazy from Hayward. I really ain't got much to say besides: I'm gone next week!

I been here already six months. That ain't nothin'. But I'm do these last nine days and move forward — and get back on them hometown streets! When I get out, I'm gonna spend time wit' my familia and do whatever they want to do. That's my main priority, to spend time with them and make up for lost times!

But that's it. I'm gonna end this in full-fashion and send my love, respect and loyalty to all. Be safe, keep your chin up before it hits your chest. But I'm out! Alrato.

-Lil Krazy

From The Beat: At the front end of your nine months, you used to say it was a lot of time to you, even if it wasn't nothing to someone with years in the pinta. Now you just say, "That ain't nothin'." And that's the message you're sending out to the next youngster doing whatever, thinking he'll be the next down homie to prove it ain't nothin' doin' time. It's sad, 'cause before you got caught up in the euphoria of your imminent release, you had an honest message to pass on. Now you're a lock-step soldier, marching toward more of the same pain you just escaped by the grace of God. Where's your thankfulness at getting off? What happened to those promises you made to do better when you prayed every night to survive this stormy weather?

My Comfort Zone

My comfort zone is in the kitchen. I love to cook and I love to eat. And when I'm in the kitchen I be in my own world.

-Chef

From The Beat: We feel the same! Here's to yummy food and good company. Ain't nothing better!

I Miss My Block!

What's up with it, Beat? This ya patna coming at you from max. Well, it's a lot going on out there on them streets, from getting money to warring — and ninjas snaking me behind my back!

I also miss my lil' brah, Shawunny. Lil' brah, I'll be back soon! I love the block; I'm also gonna hug the block when I get out. Lil' Suave, you know what it is — hold it down lil' brah, do a good program and walk away free!

-Kudah Black

From The Beat: It's so easy to fall back into the drama of the street, even when it has you down on your knees — you still swear your undying loyalty to a game that will only destroy you. Kudah B. In the street, snakes choke on their own poison, so don't let it pull you back into all the noise on the wheel of vengeance. If you love the homies on the block, teach them a better way to earn their pay than dealing out a rolled up sock and catching a sentence.

Lonely

What it really be Beat? Your young Lil' Naudie Bo is still sittin' down in this unit. My bra K-O just got a release. Stay safe bra in them crazy Oakland streets shhh. I go to court Friday. Ain't shhh gonna happen.

Back to the topic. I just really had to go bad 'cause they made Lil Naudie Bo gettin' over their ran through the closet and found it all fast. I'm sittin' in my room just wishing away. They can never stop my hustle man. Eff this room. Hold on I need to go let some anger out of this door. Eff store night, that one lil' soda ain't shhh. I drink five of them!

Yeah these four walls two slabs, thin ass covers and the Alameda County hand me downs is just all bad. This damn room just keep on blowing out this cold ass air at full blast! I'm 'bout ready to climb over this gate so I can be back on the street, so I can go in my bra's old room and get my grown man on with my wifey.

Ain't shhh to do. I'm tired of readin', tired of counting my dreads and I ain't 'bout to talk under the door to no one. I need some more paper. My pens 'bout to run out but you'll never break me, out!

Rest in peace Marcellus Haley.

-Lil' Naudie Bo

From The Beat: You've mastered the formula, Naudie Bo, of raging on paper. Using pen and paper to express all the immediate hardships we suffer in life, whether locked up or free — the paper is the free-est zone, where we can say it all without hurting anyone, hurting ourselves, or extending our isolation. Keep it flowing.

This Life

When I was 12 years old and I had not been to jail yet, life was worth living then, but now that I have been to jail more than once. Life is losing its worth; you know what I mean when I say it.

-Searching

From The Beat: We know what you mean; you never really appreciate things till they are gone. Take this experience as a lesson. Your life is valuable, treat it that way. It's never too late to get back on track.

God and Family

Why is life worth living? 'Cause you were sent here to do something for God, and your family care for you!

Why is life worth living? So you can see or learn new things in life. So you could pass on your last name to your kids and their kids. Well, that's all I got to say this week, so see you later. One love.

-Tub

From The Beat: And so you can make your family proud of you, and teach your kids how to live right and how to succeed in life.

Yah

this pain hurts
it feels like dirt
look at my smirk
these tennis shoes hurt
watching everyone die
i'm hungry
i want an apple pie
but i can't
i'm backed up beneath the bank
with animals that can't escape
feeding us these lousy county plates
the pain hurts like riding skates
go get yo' bait
and find your mate
but you can't
you're being blinded by mace
go grab a vase
run to third base
but safe
now you got to chase
for freedom
but i can't now
because i'm behind a door
i'm not poor
i just want a piece of s'more
my pain hurts

-Feelin' It

From The Beat: Now's the time to chase your freedom in your mind. Look back and see how you put your freedom at risk perpetually when you were out, and then figure out what you've got to change in the way you think and act — so you'll never have to come back to incarceration. It ain't no joke. It's worse than being broke. So when you're free, don't just choke back smoke and hit a lick, or slang rock cocaine to make someone else's momma or pops sick. Learn from the pain your feeling that you've got to change the way your dealing with reality, if you really want to be and to stay free.

Mousie's PO

Q-vo Beat? What's crackin', this Lil' Mousie. Much love and respect to all doing time.

Well first off forget my PO! She came to talk to me in my unit and she was like you need to go to Camp. She said that was her recommendation.

I got hyfee with her and was like, "What the ef for!"

She said, I'm not doing nothing with my life but gang-banging and putting in my work. But she walked away because I was talking to her foully.

But Camp for nothing? Come on, damn!

I got to bounce. 'Till pencil unites with paper again, alrato.

-Lil' Mousie

From The Beat: Mousie, we have to agree with your PO. What are you doing with your life, other than gang-banging? If you don't make some changes quick, you are headed down the path of incarceration as an adult, perhaps for the rest of your life. Do you think that your PO is just out to hate on you? Step outside of yourself for a minute and think: What would someone who really cares about you want you to do with your life? Do you care enough about yourself to make some changes?

This Pain

To see my lil girl growin up without her mother, but it is sad not to see my ninja because I don't know if he's with other breezies that got something he is going to get from me. It is pain not to see my friends or family or like I said my lil girl and my ninja. It makes me mad but I hope I get out on the 23rd to see my ninja and lil girl and my mother and my sister because I am going to miss my lil girl and sister's birthday. It is pain to me.

-Jacqueline

From The Beat: We're pretty damn sure it pains your little girl to not have you around either. We know you girls have it hard, but it makes us so mad to see how many of you are messing around and getting locked up when you have a little baby that is relying on your love and comfort. Get it together and be a mom. Don't be a mom in jail!

This Pain I See

it pains me to see my family unhappy and sad
because they are worried about me
because i'm in here and they can't see me
and i know that hurts them very much
it pains me to see my girl sad
because she misses me so much
and that hurts me too
because i know how she feels
and i'm sorry for putting her through that
but i promise when i get out
i'm going to make a difference in our life
so i won't put her in pain anymore
because that pains me to see that
peace out, this is yo' boy lil' sam
god bless everybody

-Spooks

From The Beat: You can't change the past to take away their pain today, but you can change your future, just as you say. Slowly all of them, and you, too, will feel better about life you live because you will have changed the things you do. Study, go to school, and get a degree. Get any kind of part-time job now, and later a better one because you've shown everyone you can live legally and shine like the sun.

Hectic Out There

I used to go to parties for fun, but it started to get hectic out there. Hella shhh started to happen. This Lil' Bee, and I'm go' tell you a story 'bout this time that we was on one.

It was my and my boys. We was in my car looking for a party, and then we finally found one on the other side of town — but we was funkin' with them. So we was thumped up, and one of my boys got into a fight with some ninja and beat on him. Then it was a person saying he was in our squad (but he wasn't), and he got sleepeed by a ninja we was funkin' with — and we didn't help him because he wasn't squad even though he was trying to bang it.

Then another one of my boys got into a fight, and that's when it all happened. Someone on squad started bustin' in the air, and I started bustin' in the air. Then another one of us busted his whole clip at the people we was funkin' with, and they started runnin' — bustin' at us! But they had one thang and we had three. So we scared them off.

I'm just sayin', it ain't safe in 2006. So try and stay away from trouble. I stopped going to parties about four months ago. I was still going after the fact, for a while, but I've stopped now — and I'm happy 'cause I could've been slippin' out there!

-Lil' Bee

From The Beat: We're glad you put the moral to the story, 'cause for real someone could have been shot and killed. And the killer (you, one of yours, or one of theirs) could be facing a life sentence, or be at the top of the other side's hit list — and who knows what could happen then? Bullets sprayed across the front of your house, killing who knows whom? Excitement's a kind of fun, perhaps, but certain kinds are more like a death trap!

My Comfort Zone

...is the block. That's where I get my head straight and where I get a lot of love from different religions. My feeling is being on top of the world, feeling that God's got my back 'cause I'm runnin' around like a mack. The person I feel most comfortable around is my dad and my brothers, because I know they'll be with me, right or wrong, and my sister, too. My other comfort zone is when I talk to God. Anywhere I'm at, He's gonna guide over me 100% and take over.

-Choyce

From The Beat: God doesn't want you to run around like a mack, that's not why He's got your back. Remember in the Gospel when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, and they said, "No! We should be washing your feet!" He insisted, because he was showing them God's will is to be of humble service to others. Sure, your ego wants to look like a mack, but God wants you to find a comfort zone more permanent than that. Love others whether they're right or wrong, while you yourself do right and stay strong.

Kinda Happy To Be Back

Hey, what's up with it, Beat? How are you doing today? I'm back in Camp, and my name is John. I'm kinda happy to be back because I could start my program now — and I hope that I could finish the program this time!

Even though I got problems with the people from Camp, I'm going to try to ignore it and I'm still going to try to finish the program if I can. I will ask for help if I need to.

Well, thanks for listening, Beat, and I hope that you could bring some more books.

-Johnny

From The Beat: That's the spirit, even if you have a few too many if's, 'cause we know you're just trying to be aware of the problems so you can solve them. Still it's not an if-you-can thing, 'cause we know you can — so it's a how-you-can thing! In other words, finish your program, no matter what. Don't ask yourself "if" but "how" — then do what it takes.

Living Life

What is it Beat? This ya' boy Derrick for another session, ya' feel me? But anyway, the main things why I think life is worth living is:

My family off top, I love them peoples to death.

Then I have my baby, my heart, my first love Tanisha. I want an education.

My success is very important to me, wifey and the family.

Get at me later Beat. ...And pretty girls.

-Derrick

From The Beat: Family, love and education will make a great life. But first you must get your freedom. Concentrate on getting your life straight, then life will be better than you can imagine.

Keep On Pushin'

What's up, Beat? This Lil' Marquitos coming through solid from Camp Sweeney! Now as for my title: I want to let my homeboy, Lil' Jaunito know to keep on pushin' 'cause I know what my carnal is going through. And for Juicy, stay safe, do right and keep on pushin'.

To me, keep on pushin' means to never give up on your life goals and maintain solid. We're too old to be playing with our lives, so be down for what you need to accomplish in life. People say I'm always quiet, but they don't know what's going on inside of me. So to all my loved ones in the torcida, stay up, maintain and keep on pushin'.

-Marquitos

From The Beat: We sincerely hope you mean more than "push, pull, strive" 'cause if you sacrifice your life to the so-called "causa" either you won't come out alive or you'll be locked up for life. If you really want to be there for the people in your hood, show them that it's still possible to live a life that's both legal and good, so you can raise your families safely when you're a few years older and you won't just be raising more boys to die young as so-called soldiers in a war that's nothing but corruption — distribution and drug consumption. If it's not the right goal, you just dig yourself a deeper hole.

My World / My Comfort Zone

Sup wit it? This Derrick let me get in my zone, my personal comfort zone, go dummy. I would be at my pool at the crib. We can get on. I would be surrounded by my dogs, wifey and more. My zone would be safe and no violence.

-Derrick

From The Beat: Derrick, surrounded by someone you love, at the pool with no violence sounds like a great place to be. What about when times are rough? How do you find comfort in juvenile hall?

Come Wit' Me

-Choyce

From The Beat: Why you wanna disrespect us, writing a piece like this? We understand you're writing to your peers, and anger at their disrespect makes you want to fill them with fear — but the truth is that you disrespect yourself when you make yourself appear to be just another savage, greedy, vengeful, murderous beast. We know you're better than this, to say the least. Rise above the haters, or become infected with their disease.

Stay Up

just keep your head up in life
you can make it
keep a smile on your face
and stay strong-minded
and keep in mind that god
loves you and he's watching you

-Fairlas

From The Beat: Good advice. And show God your love by choosing to do what's right, show love not hate to all God's children.

Comforted

i'm comfortable
when i listen to
the insane clown posse
and smoke weed

-John Doe

From The Beat: For some of us, knowing how to feel comfortable in our skin without needing to self-medicate is a life-long praxis. What is it about the ICP that you like? Educate us about your music.

This Pain—It Pains Me To See...

It's a pain to me when I see all my folks get killed and I find out. I be so mad I can't cry but then I still keep my head up and ride and lean to the left then lean to the right. But I bust a u-turn and ride to the town or the suite. Some people probably already heard of me. Me I'm a dedicate to my homie and don't think games is funny but what messes my head up is that I'm always lonely. I don't mess with ninjas but I still get money.

-Ella

From The Beat: We hope that you still have money because you have a real job where you are learning the meaning of pride in an honest day's work. You say it pains you to see your folks get killed, and we really feel you on that, but what are you doing to make your block a more positive place?

I Gotta Live

To me, I gotta live! I got too many people lookin' up to me, like my momma! She just want me to get through this places and just stay out!

My potnas need me around, too, 'cause we're all brothers, and we gon' ride and die together. And my wifey, 'cause she wanna have a life with a ninja, feel me? And I got lil' 'brah's and sisters lookin' up to me, too. So, it's like I know I gotta do the right thing.

But at the same time, I don't. 'Cause it's just a lot going on, like getting money and finking wit' ninjas — and I ain't gonna back down to nothing. So yeah, Beat, to me, I think I'm worth living.

-Jerm

From The Beat: We're glad you think you're worth living, and we think you are, too. But now when you say you'll back down to nothing, that sounds like a death wish. Say Death, sickle in one hand, is standing right in front of you, and he's holding out his other fist upside down toward you, unfolding and folding back up his index finger, saying, "Come on. You ready for me?" And you won't back down? Well, you can say it's not like that, 'cause you can win in the game of selling dope, hitting licks and finking. Hmm, but then you also say, "[W]e gon' ride and die together." You diss, but you might as well spit in your mother's face and invite your little brothers down into the same grave. Live right, walk away from a needless fight.

Home Is My Comfort Zone

My comfort zone is at home. There's no better place when I see my door I get really happy as it opens. Like a castle I walk in as a queen and head upstairs to those who really care which is my family. I express my feelings and they get dealt with. So to those who don't have a home, my arms are open, come to me.

-Sitraya

From The Beat: Kind words to your sisters, many of whom do not have homes, as you know. Remember to follow your words and be kind and welcoming to those not as lucky as you.

Pelukaz

This is the homie Pelukaz from Redwood City. I am about to tell you my stats real quick, I am gonna go to Boys Republic over in LA. Much love to all.

-Pelukaz

From The Beat: Hopefully we get a little more insight with your next piece!

My Hate

I hate someone I don't know.

The police.

They try to beat on me.

I hate the police.

They're paid to snitch
look what they did to Rodney King,
and my Bra Guise.

They killed Tupac and B.I.G.

I think that NWA Said it first, "____
the police."

-Gerald

From The Beat: Well NWA wasn't the first to say it, but they made it big, public. If you know the police can't be trusted in your hood, then avoid them at all costs. Go to school! Stop chilling! That might mean giving up some things you enjoy...drugs, money, girls, the corner, whatever...but given what you know about the police in your neighborhood, don't tempt fate. Stay inside! Go to the library! Play sports! Get a job!

We're too old to be
playing with our
lives, so be down
for what you need to
accomplish in life.

Untitled

I don't really have nothing to write. I just want to say what's up to all who're locked up with me.

I'm ready for my hood to the day I die. But you can't be ready for you hood 'cause your hood ain't going to be ready for you. 'Cause your hood's going to be there when you gone, it's still there and you lookin down or up at it. So what I'm saying is you could be ready for your hood, but think about it first.

Where I'm from we like "to go dumb", like E-40 said.

I post in the hall and I ain't going to show how it's done. The hood is always going to be there when you is gone. RIP all who are gone, you will be missed and loved forever. I'm the alone girl you ever seen.

-Mrs. Mac

From The Beat: So what does your life consist of after the hood? Hopefully plenty!

My Smile

Nothing makes my smile disappear because I don't really be smiling. Especially when I'm in here because this ain't a place to be happy, because this shhh aint cool. This shhh be stressful when you in here, but I'm 'bout to go to Camp soon, in two weeks. So, I'm gon' be gone, up outta here. So I'm just lettin' y'all know.

-Roland

From The Beat: Roland, what value is your life if you cannot smile? You've got a long list of people you know locked up. Who has the power to free them? Free yourself from this lifestyle that has locked up you and most of your friends. If you don't make any changes, you have no one to blame but yourself. Free yourself!

Gettin' Money

Gettin' money hittin' licks and gettin rich. I was all about it.
RIP Cell, one of the real.

-Lil' Rony

From The Beat: Ah, Rony, we don't believe a person can get rich on the street. Ask yourself how much you and yours were really making. Be sure you include the prices of funerals, missed education, lost income because of jail, and cost to parents and loved ones for missing work to deal with the system. We've seen how much heart you have, that's where your true riches lie.

Back Again

What's up with it Beat? What it do? This Mousie from Berkley. I'm back up in here for the eleventh time. Well I'm 18 now so they might send me to Santa Rita or let me go home. I hope for the best. To all keep yo head up. Don't let these walls keep you down.

-Mousie

From The Beat: Mousie we are disappointed - what were you thinking? You been in this place 10 times before and you are 18. If you don't start expecting more of yourself you are going to keep reliving your mistakes over and over again.

My Ticket Out Is My Education

My ticket out is getting out of jail, finishing high school and graduating from college so I can get a good job, have a place to live and something to eat. Maybe even get a good car that won't break on me.

-Martin

From The Beat: We know that college isn't the only way to make your life better but sure is a great way. The road can be long and hard but you can do it if you really put your

What I Am

I'm so effin' fly
I bang and some of my elders ask why
'Cause I live to die
I chose not to lie
And I try to survive
But thy enemy will always surprise
But I will rise
They label me a killer
But I'm really a drug dealer
I get a kick out life
'Cause it's a thriller

-Billitant

From The Beat: Funny enough, a drug dealer actually IS a killer. Think of how many lives have been lost: children who lose their moms, mothers who lose their children. The most murders take place between ten p.m. and four a.m., which is exactly when the kids with rocks in their pockets ply their trade. They kill, they fight, they get arrested, they die. Where is the thrill in that?

Get Money

Money is not everything
but you can get money
by selling drugs
But there is a right way
to get money

I used to think selling drugs was cool. I never got caught

Get money

Money used to be everything.

Now money is nothing to me, because I'm in Juvenile Hall.

Get Money

but when I get out I will have money doing the right thing.

-Lil' Marquis

From The Beat: If this lesson you learned about money sticks with you, then you've definitely come out of this lock-down experience ahead of the game. What's your plan for making that legit money, both long term and short term?

Smile Into a Frown

The thing that makes my smile disappear is when I'm waitin' two weeks for my next court date and I think man, I'm probably gonna go to the hut. But then I get in front of the judge and he says blah blah blah, detain him for another two weeks.

-T-Baby

From The Beat: We can see how that would turn a smile into a frown, a laugh into a grown, hopefully by the time we print this, the judge will have found something better to say than blah blah blah. And hopefully you will be gone for real and never come back.

More Dead Potnas

I was in camp wit' my bras and ninjas started dyin'.

I wanna say RIP Paco, Bo, Reese, Meezy, Dubbie, we was in camp, and people got out and got killed.
RIP Ron Ron, Rob, Will. Gone but not forgotten.

And always loved.

-Anon

From The Beat: This list is just too long. It hurts to type it out, but we know that can't even compare to how much it hurt you to have to write it, you and all the loved ones of these boys. Do you have any ideas on how this could change? We'd love to hear them.

Losing Someone Special

What males my smile disappear is hearing bad news about somebody I care about like my cousin Keke.

-Wallace

From The Beat: It is always hard to lose the ones we love. Our hearts go out to you and your family.

show off

Yes I used to show off in front of girls. One day I stole a car when I was going to my girl's house, then my friend stole a car, so I turned in her parking lot.

She was outside so I went outside, and then I was doing donuts in the street. My friend was doin' them next to me. That is a showoff

-Lil' Quis

From The Beat: Donuts in a stolen care. Oy vey - got any ideas on how to impress girls withOUT risking your life or your freedom? Because what's the use of impressing a girl if you can't be with her to enjoy the fruits of your efforts?

Different Color, Same People

All people should be treated the same because it doesn't matter what color you are. On the inside we are all the same.

-Martin

From The Beat: We 100% agree and wish that everyone would wise up to this simple and obvious fact. In the meantime people like us will just keep having to remind the rest of them.

Ticket Out

My ticket out the streets is the street. If I make enough money the legit way so nothing comes back to me about how I got what I got. What I'm going to have, so I can let everyone who thought this was going to happen by criminal activity, because they knew I was going to be successful either way. I knew I was goin' to be legit.

-Billitant

From The Beat: First off, you've got one of the best pen-names we've ever seen. Congratulations on a masterstroke of nomenclature. Second, how do you plan on making this legit money? Tell us your long term project, how are you going to do it, what's it going to take?

My Lady

Mt ticket out is having a female, a young person who cares about me and motivates me to do well, giving me the same motivation I give myself.

-Wallace

From The Beat: We agree that it is important, if not essential, to have support but no one else can be your ticket out, that should come from within.

Hellhole

My life has been a hellhole, because I have been in and out of psych hospitals, and I have been on meds since I was 7 years old. That is why my life has been a hellhole. I have talked to every psychiatrist that you can name, sometimes life don't mean shhh to me.

Ninjas say I have life in jail or a group home. These ninjas ain't seen shhh that I have seen, and haven't been through what I've been through. When I get out of this hellhole I am going back to school and support my family the best way I can, but I still feel like life "Don't mean shhh to me."

-Lil' Miami The King

From The Beat: See, you can say this, but we know that you've got a flip side to this despair, because your two other pieces speak so eloquently about Martin Luther King, and how much your grandma's love inspires you. We know that life matters to you, the same way you matter to the people who care about you. So hold on - and ignore the people who put you down and try to predict your future.



My Ticket

My ticket out is:
To do good

And stay out of other people's way
And don't get into no fights
And have respect for everyone around me
To do what every staff ask and tell me to do
And a ninja should be out.

-J-Stalin

From The Beat: Sounds like a good plan. Then hardest part will be to follow through. Every time you feel like breaking one of these rules, take a deep breath and remember what's most important to you.

Gonna Do Good

I think my ticket out is to do good and get on Top-Citizen. Then, stay out of trouble.

Man, I think when people get out they don't know how to act, smoking, knowing they got to get pee-tested. Then when it's time to go get tested...

-Baka

From The Beat: People make some pretty stupid choices, don't be one of them. Baka you're too smart for them. Learn from their mistakes.

Life Changes

Life changes, but days still go by

Why wait and just get high
And smoke to the sky
Locked in the Hall
Lookin' at walls
While I sit in sleep
And watch my dreams fall
Watch when I get out
I'm a handles my business
What I'm gon' do
Not waitin' and watchin' my life pass me up
So who it feel like
Thangs change almost everyday
So I'm not about to sit here and do the same
Everyday life changes
So don't waste time
'Cause I'm still go rep 'till I die.

-Randy

From The Beat: Randy, your last line contradicts every other line in this piece. If you continue down the path you are headed, you will spend most of your life incarcerated and chances are your life will be cut short. If you don't want to waste time and you are committed to doing something with your life, do something positive! Think about all the risks you take, is it really worth it? What are you really representing?

Q-Vo!

Q-vo Beat! I want to send my love and respect to all doing time, this Lil' Mousie.

Well for me I'm going to a group home again. Well I'm just going to pimp that lil' placement and keep it solid for the people who be running from camp and group homes for nothing. Just pimp that lil' placement and then get out! Kick it with the homies. Now that's keeping it solid feel me.

-Lil' Mousie

From The Beat: If keeping it solid means, staying and finishing your program, then we respect that. You can't be on the run your whole life. Life ALWAYS catches up.

This Pain To Me

This pain to me is hard to see
This pain for me is not speakable.

-Baby Fresh

From The Beat: Boy do we wish there was time on this day for you finish up this poem, because it's just great. What were your next lines going to be, and how does a poet speak of the unspeakable?

My Pain

Life is worth living, 'cause shhh, ain't nowhere else to go but Heaven and Hell.

I'm here now, hella mad. But sometimes life is shhh in the town where I live at, and you ain't promised tomorrow.

-Angelo

From The Beat: Nobody is promised tomorrow. Our lives our precious and sometimes we forget, till it's too late. You are wasting you precious time sitting in the Hall. Think about it next time you do something that may jeopardize your freedom.

What Up!

What's up Beat! This Shaggy from Oakland and I'm just writing 'cause I'm bored. But man, I'm tryna go home for real! I haven't talked to my cousins at all and I'm 'bout to go bad, for real!

I got court on Friday and hopefully by the time y'all read this I'm-a be gone.

Wasup to all the in here right now stay up don't fall one love to all.

-Shaggy

From The Beat: Don't go bad! Shaggy, how do you think the counselors or the judge will respond to you acting up? The only one you will hurt is yourself. Be patient, and think about what's best for you. You'll go home a lot sooner if you behave yourself. Peace.

My Ticket Out

I think my ticket out is going to school and getting myself together and to abide by my mother's rules.

-Kelly Belly

From The Beat: That's right! Some have to learn the hard way.

Live!

so you can
make money
and see your kids
grow up

-John Doe

From The Beat: You said a lot.

Life Is Not a Game

I try not to play with life, because that will get you killed out here. So I get with the business. People be looking at you, and you don't even know who looking at you! It's crazy.

And sometimes you just got to show the best of yourself. I am just a student in the life I live. One day I want to have some students, you know what I am talking about? Just look for the criss-cross, 'cause they get peoples killed these days. You keep it real with yo'self, and it's going to be good. You know everything be greater later. Police find them peoples. Try not to talk to them that much, because they will have you criss-cross something or somebody, and that's not cool.

-Choyce

From The Beat: It will not be greater later unless you quit the life of the mob or the mafia, or whatever you want to call the gang-banging, turf-claiming, drug dealing, murderous life style you want to call a "business". You're old enough to be about the business of living a straight life. If you continue to say you'll never be a square, then you'll also never get to live free out there. Travis, you've got to believe you can do more than live and die on the street. You're still young. Your life's just begun. Make up your mind not only that there's a better life for you down the line — start living it today. It's an inside job, inside your heart.

Still in The Hall

What it do Beat. This ya' boy Lil' Gary still in the hall.

I've been here for a month now and they just moved me to max. It took me a couple of days to get used to it, but I'm here and probably gon' be here, so I guess I should just do my program and try and stay out of trouble. I'm gon' get at y'all next time.

-Lil' Gary

From The Beat: This is just a short piece, but it hints that you've got a good attitude about the time you have to spend here. We're looking forward to hearing more details in your next piece!

Smile

What makes my smile disappear is being in here 'cause I can't be happy while I'm in jail. This ain't no place to be happy.

-Shagy

From The Beat: Shagy, you're right. But, you can take pride in making achievements and lessons learned. You may be in a bad situation, but make the best of it.



My Big And Little Brothers

What's up, Beat? A young ninja still up in this spot, and this week I'm writing about my brother. As you know, I'm in Juvenile Hall and I got a big brah named Seals, and my ninja been having my back since I've been here.

And my big brah Yung Mess, I miss you and I love you my ninja, you've been having my back since I came out our moms. Even right now you still got my back. Even if I don't live with you any more you're still my brother.

This is to my lil' brothers, Bubba, and Felix. I love y'all with all my heart and right now I don't want y'all to look up to me because I'm in a bad situation and I don't want y'all to be in my footsteps. I got to go but I love y'all ninjas. I will be out soon. One.

-Lil' Tuttle

From The Beat: It must be hard for you to say to your little brothers, "don't look up to me." That's powerful, and courageous. We hope things change, so you can be the role model you want to be for them.

Where Have You Been And Where Are You Going?

I'm fourteen years old, and I'm afraid that if I keep coming to the hall, the words that I told you last week, "Santa Rita to San Quentin," will come true.

I was told, that, if I don't like the sound of it, change, and do not just wait for someone to come and save me.

I do have a plan that I believe is going to work. I go to court in two days, and I hope I get out. Well anyways when I do get out, I'm going to live with my older sister in San Jose, go to school, play football. Stay away from the hall, not walk down the hall, punching people.

All right, that's my plan. Got to go for now. Smell you later.

-Soane

From The Beat: Sounds like a great plan! Keep your hands to yourself is a must! Thanks for sharing it in the pages of The Beat, best to you in San Jose.

RIP CELL

Me and Cell were in different parts of the same click, but when I first met Cell we did it big, smoked a lot of weed and bra' got me drunk for my first time.

But Bra cell did way better things than that. When I had this fight - which I didn't win - Bra showed me how to put my hands up and how to move around. He also asked somebody that I didn't know to spin that night when I couldn't get home. You could say Big Bra was lookin' out for me. Every time I would see him in a car I would flag him down and tell him to get out and smoke with me.

We also did stupid stuff like bottle licks at Albertson's, even though I never stole a bottle because I didn't know how. But we stole cars too. That was my specialty. We all know how to drive on the freeway.

The night Cell got shot he gave me bus fare to get home to my dad's house, and I woke up and my sister told me he got shot. So I started finding out info, and at the funeral I put in on bra's funeral. RIP Cell

-Lil' Kt

From The Beat: This is the kind of piece that we hope young Marcellus can hear wherever he is. He did the best he knew how to watch out for and help the people he cared about, and everything that gets written about him in The Beat points to a young man with a great heart. One wonders, in a different world and different environment, the lessons he passed down - how to smoke, how to drink, how to steal, how to fight - might have been different. Because smoking and drinking and stealing are the things that land you in The Hall, or much-much worse. So our question to you is then, is it possible to remember and honor his love for his people, while saying no to the some of the darker activities you all did together? Wouldn't going on to escape the streets be a wonderful way to honor his memory?

In That Zone

In the zone wit' my cool cats,
doin' what I do best,
I'm movin' when it move fast.

For the green

I know is cash.

If you in zone,

keep it real,

keep it solid.

I put my chips all in,

gamblin' have no friends,

have no life.

I'm a vampire

only come out at night.

I keep my game tight.

In my zone,

I'm a straight gamer,

got to be a winner

like Super Mario,

be in my way

you gon' be sorry though,

this how I go out,

that window braids in air,

rockin' Encye wear.

In my zone,

Mainy zone

-Mainy Hyena

From The Beat: one of the best rhymes in this ditty was Super Mario/Sorry though... and there's also the long form rhymeo "zone wit' cool cats/movin' when it move fast." Formally it's dextrous and inventive. If you had to choose between form and content, which would you consider the strongest feature of this poem/flow?

Why is Life Worth Livin'

Life is worth livin' because of myself my family, money, plus my dreams . I live for my mom, she's special in my life. She keeps me going. Women keep me going, 'cause without them I don't know what I'd do. My ninjas keep me going 'cause they steady bangin' and getting dough. Plus they show me love also show me right from wrong.

Sometimes I wake up when I was at home thinking to myself, life screw life.

Like why am I fighting to live if I'm just living to die, somebody please answer that question.

-B

From The Beat: You asked for an answer to your question, and so we'll give it a shot. This is just our opinion and so we might be wrong, but - well, how about this: You AREN'T living to die. There's a lot that might make you feel this way - the schools, stress at home, the death on the streets, maybe even feeling like nobody cares. But your life is precious, your life is meaningful. It's a crying shame that more hasn't happened yet to make you realize how precious and important your life is, and if we tell you this, why should you believe us? Well - think about this. No one in the world has your thoughts, your fingerprints, your exact face. If you were gone, the world would lose everything inside you forever... all your dreams, everythign that makes you different from anyone else. If you were a one-of-a-kind diamond, or a one-of-a-kind cadillac, your value would be talked about on the news. But you are a one of a kind YOU, and that's even more valuable. This is our thought - agree or disagree, we'd love to hear your answer.

Police

The people I hate are the police, because they like to put me in jail. It is not cool to be in this place. Be cool on the outs. Be safe. Don't get caught up in little shhh.

-Li'l Guis

From The Beat: Good point - most of the time folks are going to jail because they couldn't let little shhh go, and then little shhh turns into a big problem. It all starts with a seed! AS for your hate towards the police, well, we suggest you figure out another way of living so you have no more run-ins with the police.

This Is To All The Girls I Love

Don't be afraid to love someone totally and completely. Love is the most fulfilling and beautiful feeling in the world don't be afraid that you will get hurt or that the other person won't love you. There is a risk in everything you do and the rewards are never so great as what love can bring so let yourself get involved completely and honestly and enjoy the possibility that what happens might be the only real source of happiness.

-G-Money

From The Beat: Showing your feelings does seem risky sometimes. Why is that? G-Money, can you share with us your theories on why love seems so scary before you plunge into it?

I love You

These past few years I suppose we've changed as often as the seasons. But there has always been a rainbow at the end of each storm, a calm that seems to last as long as we're together.

I've been alone. I've paced my steps over and over again, but never once have you left my thoughts. You're always with me.

We've been through a lot. We've grown in pain. We've been stretched for beyond love's boundaries. Yet there has never been a time that our arms weren't open wide for refuge.

To me you're the peace that calms my windy day and brings about spring in the heart of frozen winter. I adore you, and my love for you is forever.

-G-Money

From The Beat: While it's great that you share this love with another person, The Beat wants to know how much you love yourself. If you cared more about your own life, would you keep doing the things that take away your freedom?

The Pain

What it dookie? It's the one and only Derrick.

The few things that pain me is to see my mom and wifey hurting 'cause I'm on lockdown. I won't be home 'till September 15. It hurts seeing them in pain and reading letters.

-Derrick

From The Beat: Your life affects more people than just yourself. Imagine the joy when you accomplish things that you can be proud of. How many people will be proud of you?

It Pains To See Me

What's up Beat, this your boy Lil' Joker. It pains me to see my mom coming here to see me because she is always crying. It also pains me to see that my mom knows I'm a gang banger. It pains me to see that I can't stay out of trouble. Well, that's all.

-Lil' Joker

From The Beat: You're a brave young man to be honest about what pains you. Stick with your true feelings, and you have a better chance at ending this pain.

Fearing What We Don't Know

I was thinking about why people named bad dreams nightmare, and why people don't have a name for good dreams. I think it's 'cause people think the night is bad, not right, ugly, powerless. What I think is that is if people stop fearing what they do not know, their spiritual eye will open and their judgmental eye will close.

-V-Time B4

From The Beat: This is very interesting, V-Time. Besides our special name for nightmares, what other changes do you think would come about if we were to open our spiritual eyes and close our judgmental ones?

Life Is Family

Life is worth living because I don't want to break my mom's heart. If she is happy, makes me happy. I want to finish high school because no one in my family in San Francisco has finished it. My brother dropped out, my two cousins dropped out. I want to show them that anyone could graduate instead of only girls.

-Young Yao B4

From The Beat: You must be feeling very disappointed in yourself to make your mother so sad for you being locked up. Well, you have it in your power to make her happy, and you know what you have to do to make it happen. That's more than a lot of people in your situation have figured out, so don't let yourself or your mom down again.

It Pains Me To See

It pains me to see people getting killed for no reason, only because they're in the wrong place at the wrong time. That really pains me a lot. It will pain me if I will get shot at, only because I'm in the wrong place at the wrong time. And it really pains me to see people get jacked, only because they got something expensive and they can't do nothing about it.

-JR B1

From The Beat: We understand what you mean, JR, but at the same time it pains us to think that you can justify some killings but not others. Of course it's tragic when someone gets killed because they're in the wrong place at the wrong time, but isn't also tragic when young people engage in deliberate gunplay and either shoot someone or get shot themselves? Does that kind of killing pain you? What about you? Do you ever deliberately put yourself or others in danger of that kind? If the answer is yes, that pains us...

Pains To See

Pain to see is when people is out there getting killed, people out there losing there life for some turf that a white man own. And pain is when people come to juvy for nothing, commit crimes that they didn't do, like my homie who is in here for some shhh that he didn't do. That's pain that hurt me in the inside. That's all.

-Jacori B1

From The Beat: Yes, it pains us to see these things, too. What can we all do to change this terrible picture? What can you do personally to avoid the kind of actions that put you behind these four walls, and not contribute to the war in the streets? How do you deal with the pain inside you?

Dreams Of Freedom

I wish I could be free
I did five months in dis place wearin' green
But this isn't the life for me
It's coo' 'cause I'm 'bout to be set free
No more halls, no more dirty drawe's
CITO out fo' real.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: We're really happy for you, CITO, because we think you've matured a lot, and you'll respect your freedom a lot more than in the past. But we'll miss you in these workshops! (We think you look great in green, but not in county-issue...)

What Life Is Worth Living For

Life is worth living for. Life is worth living for because life is too short, and you have people that love you and want you to do right. But at the same time, you're on the streets thugging, and they don't believe what you believe in because it's bad. But that how you feel about life at the time, and some people might change how they feel when time pass and feel life is worth living for something else.

-Young Clap B4

From The Beat: When you say that "they don't believe what you believe in," what do you mean? What do you believe in? What do "they" believe in? Besides time passing, what makes people change how they feel about life?

Hearing About Rape Pains Me

It pains me to hear about lil' girls gettin' raped. A lot of things in this world really don't be affectin' me. But when I hear a female got raped, that shhh really messes me up on the inside. Like if I'm watchin' the news and hear that someone got shot, I really don't care. But if there's a story about a lil girl gettin' kidnapped and raped, that be havin' me feelin' hella bad.

-Tyree B4

From The Beat: It's interesting that the crime of rape would affect you more than the crime of murder? We don't want to get too personal into your business, but is your revulsion when you hear about rape based on anyone's specific experience that you know about?

My Life Is Important

What's up Beat? My life is important because I have people that love me and will die for me.

So my life is worth living to pay back what people deserve for helping me get through my life. My life might have been bad, but it's all changes, that's to The Beat

-Young Nick B4

From The Beat: We're glad that things that might have gone bad are not developing that way. But who are these wonderful people who are willing to die for you? We hope that is just a saying, because we're more interested in people willing to live for others rather than die for them. What changes do you see in your future, and how will those changes change your long-term future?

Living For My Family

Life is worth living 'cause I have my family. My family is there for me when I need them. My family helps me keep my head up. My cousin helped me get my mind right. My mother helped me stay out of trouble for the moment while she could. But my mother can't teach me how to be a man. So I had to do it myself and be in the streets and get money and thug in public... but that's not how to be a man.

-Dude B2

From The Beat: So, by handing your freedom over to a bunch of strangers, you've learned that you weren't being "a man" by copying what you saw on the streets. So tell us, what does it mean to be a man? How are you preparing yourself to be the man you want to be? You seem to have a lot of support from your family (which is something that not everybody has), so how will you show them the love and respect they deserve, and what are you willing to sacrifice for them in return for all they have sacrificed for you?

Riding

Riding in a big body Benz.
Countin' my ends
Hollain' revenge
They wanna see me lose, but watch me win
The feds watch me figure out every block I've been
Oh shhhh, they tryin' ta do me in

-BooBoo Black B4

From The Beat: We took about half of this poem out because it just isn't appropriate. If "winning" to you is riding in a Benz, then we think you've settled for way too little. Break out of the limitations of block-thought. Let yourself go. Dream bigger.

Why is life worth living

I cherish every second of my life. Even though I'm in here I cherish it. Why? Because tomorrow isn't promised. I cherish my life 'cause I got a lil' one on da way, ya feel me?

I cherish my life 'cause every day is worth living for.

-Lil' Nicoya B4

From The Beat: You're so right, tomorrow is not promised. That's why we hate to see people throwing away today by handing their freedom over to a system that can't possibly care as much for them as they do for themselves. Think about the future that is represented in your child-to-be, and do the right thing.

Back In This Place

As we can see, I am J-Stubba F-baby, in for my fans. You know who I be and where I from, but now they got me back in this dumb-ass place again. But it's good. I will make it through it like I did last time. They can't hold me down forever 'cause I am a young thug running shhh. They mad 'cause they not in my shoes, don't have power that I have. So for the people that want to see me down, forget you.

-J-Stubba F-baby B4

From The Beat: It seems to us that you've got it wrong. It's not "they" that go you back, it's you. You apparently want to see yourself down since you haven't figured out that doing the same things over again will only earn you the same consequences over again. And don't believe that foolish cliché that we read so often in these pages: "They can't hold me down forever." The truth is they can hold you down for longer and longer times that can lead to forever unless you make some changes in your life. We know you will not believe our words, and that you will keep thinking that you are smarter than all our friends who once thought as you do and are now doing long stretches (some multiple life sentences) in state prison. That is, you will keep thinking like that until the minute you wake up, too late, and realize that "they" aren't mad at all. You make the system happy because what you call your "power" only gives them more power over your life. Of course you will "make it through," but is that all you want in life? Before you answer what you want out of life, look around you and weigh your options carefully.

A Rap

I sit back and ask myself what's really going on
I get a dose of this reality when you wake up out of your zone
In the daily news be stressing fools is mainly the truth,
so why drink 80 proof smoking Bombay trying to concentrate with my screws loose

Role model off a whole bottle do whatever it takes
you make mistakes you only people burn for trying to fake

Taking off my plate so I can feed my babies momma
and my babies 'cause I really don't need da crazy drama

My momma made a monster so I mobbing
at a truth at war people ain't watchin
'cause they shootin' lootin' stealing whatever that makes it happens

I might be a part of the crowd if I didn't spend my time on rappin'

-Yung C B4

From The Beat: How does rapping keep you out of the crowd? If you got babies and babies mamas in your life, then you're already part of a crowd! Anyway, keep rapping. We like your raps, even if your mama did make a monster. Maybe your raps can tame the beast, and keep you out of here!

My Grandmother Needs Me

It pains me to see myself locked up while my grandmother is at home sick. The reason why it pains me is because I know her condition. I know what could happen to her if she heard I was locked up.

It's a pain to see people like myself just throw their teenage years away over a bag of weed or because this person beat me up in front of everybody and they teased me so I reacted and got caught.

It also pains me to see my grandmother by herself with no one to fully dedicate themselves to take care of her. What pains me the most is knowing the reason why I'm no longer with my grandmother and I messed up when they took me.

-Tae Woppa B1

From The Beat: It seems to us like you messed up big time, both because your reaction to being teased could have resulted in the kind of tragedy that can never be undone (both for you and your victim), and because you stopped thinking about how much your grandma needed you at that moment and acted out of your own impulsiveness. We hope when you get out of this situation you'll realize that to be a mature and responsible young man (rather than a child), you need to think about your grandma before you mess up and not afterwards. With that in mind, what do you want to change about your own behavior when you're able to make your own choices again?

It Pains Me To See . . .

It pains me to see... my mom seeing me in here! Also my grandma. It's pain to see people get killed in the neighborhood. Somebody just got killed today, 8/15/06, in my neighborhood.

-D-M B1

From The Beat: Yes, it is painful to see people your age killing and dying. What are you going to change on the outs so that you don't have to experience the pain of seeing your mom and grandma hurting because you are locked up?

Free Purp

Man, wassup, Beat? This yo' boy, Lil' Baby Purp, up in this San Francisco hall, thuggin' it out. But I can't wait to get out, so Baby Purp could eat on them streets with all ma ninjas, 'cause I gotta hit tha block. So ta all ma ninjas who can't wait ta get out, keep y'all heads up. Holla at yo' boy, Baby Purp.

-Baby Purp B1

From The Beat: If all you're thinking about is going back to the block and your homies to continue doing what got you here to begin with, then we can pretty much predict that we'll be seeing you here again. Or are we missing something? Do you have plans to make some changes so you won't be giving away your freedom to a bunch of strangers? What are those plans?

Money

Money to me is life, because without money you will starve. Me, I'm hungry about ma money. I will do mostly anything for money. That's one thing I won't let nobody take from me.

-Baby Purp B1

From The Beat: You say you won't let anybody take your money away, but didn't someone take everything away when they locked you up? If you have to trade your freedom to get your money, then how much is the money worth? Where can you spend it in here — or the far worse places the system has waiting for you down the line? Have you thought about ways to make your money the slow and steady way (legit)? How?

I Won't Never Come Back

I just can't wait to get outta here. My PO is acting like a girl and won't let me out, but when I get out I won't never come back to this stupid place because this ain't the place I want to be. This ain't for me. In and out of jail. So I will let this be the last time I have to go through somebody telling me when to sit up, go to sleep, take a shower. So I'm done wit' this.

-Jamar B5

From The Beat: Good for you! Now, all it takes is for you to remember this promise when you're back in the situation to make choices. Don't forget which choices lead to which consequences.

All That Glitters Is Not Silver And Gold

Life is light but I'm in da dark
It's like a museum dat's full of art
In ma room it's no room like a foot in a shoe
Wake up every mornin' and got nothing to do
Can't wait till that day I could be free
I feel like a blind man that cannot see
On the outs my life is silver and gold
In the halls it's like a man that's old.

-Fg B5

From The Beat: Yeah, we can see how this could get old very quickly, and make us feel old if we'd been through it more than once. What does a life of silver and gold do for you if it means giving portions of it away to strangers who control you?

God Works In Mysterious Ways

I wish I wasn't in here. I'm in here for no reason, but nobody believes me. It hurts to be locked up for no reason at all, but I ain't really tripping. Maybe God put me in here for a reason. People say He works in mysterious ways. Maybe this is one of His ways, or working wit' me. I don't know.

I'll be out soon, and I can't wait until that day comes. I'ma be happy as ----. You fill in the blank. But, chea, dough, dis y'all first an' last time seein' dis dreadhead up in here!

-Dreadhead B1

From The Beat: If God put you here for a reason, what could that reason be? How are you using your time (both in and out of here)? We like your determination to make this the last time you come here, but what are you going to do to make sure that comes true — especially if you did nothing to get here?

My Safe Zone

When I get enough money, I'm going to build my dream house with my family, friends. One of the buildings will be an animal shelter. Then the other one is my house where I'm safe.

-Vincent B1

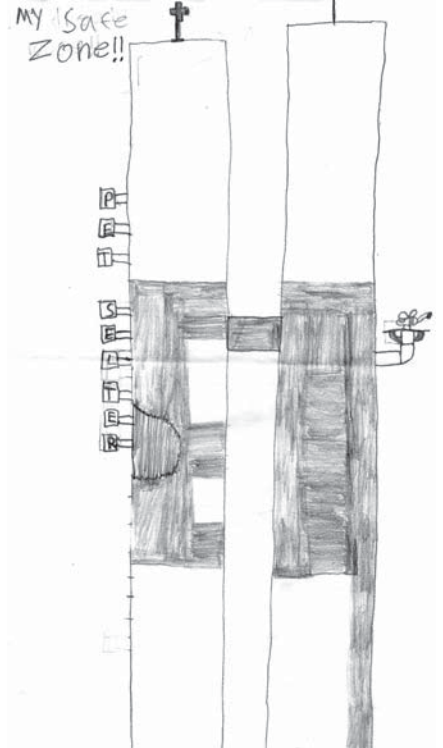
From The Beat: What kind of animals do you want to build a shelter for, Vincent? How many rooms will your dream house have? Who will live in it?

My Comfort

My comfort zone is not like your usual comfort zone. Some people's comfort zone is their room or their house, but mines is my projects. I feel comfortable when I'm behind those gates around my family and my homies. Standin' behind the buildings or in someone's house. Everyone is a family in my jets. We all love each other. That's why I'm so comfortable. It's my second home. When I'm posted up on the block I feel like I'm at home and there's no place like home.

-Kb B5

From The Beat: Does that mean if you had a chance to move out of the jets, you'd refuse? That's interesting. Who comes into your 'hood that your posted for? We've read about a lot of situations there that would make us hella uncomfortable. Seen any of those?



Being Cool

When I get out I'm going to George Jr. Republic. I'm going do my time and get up out of the system for my big bra. That's all I have to say.

-Junebag B1

From The Beat: We admire you for wanting to accomplish something and make it outside the system for your brother. We hope you'll see that in the end, you're really doing it for yourself! Congratulations, because you are on a path that will make your future much brighter.

Worth Living

Life is worth living and living is worth life. If you don't understand that it means basically to live life to the fullest because it could be taken away from you any way possible.

-Darius B5

From The Beat: But what does it mean to live life to the fullest? Is coming here part of that "fullest" or not?

Still Time For Change

Life is worth living 'cause I'm still young and I got family that cares about me. I still can change my life around and do something positive with myself.

-Squeak B5

From The Beat: Do you want to change your life around? You're right, you're still young and you can bring about positive change in your life.

Life Is Worth Living

Why is life worth living? Everything... customizing my own comfort zone. In my room listening to slow jams wit' my female.

-Marcus B5

From The Beat: This is a sweet dream, Marcus. How are you going to see that it comes true, then hold onto it when you've got it?

If Only I Could've Thought First

Me, I'm just a unique person so most of the time I'm always in my own lil' world, not worried about nobody but what I'm doing. But while I sit here in jail, dat gives me time to think about what was going on when I was on da outs. But just thinking of da outs make me mad 'cause I just be like, "Mane I wish I could've thought before I did what I did," so I can't be in dis place 'cause you miss everything.

-Gueela Guee GU

From The Beat: So it seems like your mad at yourself for waiting to do your thinking until after you got locked up. But if you're using your time to think now, and if that thinking will lead to some changes for a better future when you get out, then maybe there's a good reason for you to be here to prepare yourself never to come back!

It Pains Me

Well for me it pained me to see the guts come out my ninjas stomach, I mean I had never seen a dead person body slumped over like that. One more thing that hurt was when the judge told me that my father had no say-so where I went.

-Richard B2

From The Beat: Death of anyone we love is always sad, but it is tragic when it is someone young who dies violently because it didn't have to be. You have seen more than anyone should have to see. We hope that this terrible experience will inspire you to change the way you have been living so that someone other young person doesn't have to write another tragic piece about a violent death...

Disrespecting Females

It pains me to see that ninjas disrespect females by callin' them out of their names.

-Justice B2

From The Beat: Why do you think so many boys do this to girls? Have you ever disrespected a female?

Comfort Zone

My comfort zone is when I am with my family because I just feel this warm feeling in my body that just tells me I'm safe with my family.

-Demarcus B2

From The Beat: Besides your family, where else do you feel comfortable? Can you be comfortable by yourself? What do you need to be comfortable?

My Life Is Precious

Life is worth living a lot. My life is worth everything to me because I love my freedom. The thought of being out makes my life worth living. It feels good when I'm on da block just chillin' tryna mess with some female for real. But it's worth living for my family, and my freedom is worth living for.

-Hot-Rod B2

From The Beat: If you love your freedom, then why did you let someone take it away from you? Or, to put it more accurately, why did you give it away? Do you plan to stop doing what it was that brought you here? If not, we'll be seeing you again, and you will have other opportunities to write about how much you love freedom from behind four walls... Think about it.

Liking It Here

Everything I read, everybody's always saying it's horrible in here. People come in the first day and complaining they can't stand being in here. For me it's not bad at all. I feel like I'm in some kind of program. I ain't even tripping.

I been here for three weeks and it went by hella fast. I been on my Ps and Qs. Most the time I prefer to be in my room and sleep or read.

I'm not planning on changing my life. I'ma be in this game till the day I die. I want the life of fast money. But I wanna b a hustler's wify, a life that's interesting, drama.

-Kendahl GU

From The Beat: You have no idea whether you're going to be in this game till the day you die or not. Nobody knows the future. All you know is what you're thinking today — and since we can see it's the thinking of a child, we have high hopes that as you mature (and you will), you'll recognize that change always happens, whether you want it to or not. The only thing you have some control over is the kind of change. By saying you plan on being in the game for the rest of your life, what you're really saying is that you plan to be coming back here again. But since you don't mind it here, maybe that's all right with you. All we can say is that this place is like Kiddie Land compared to the places the system has waiting for you. And they're hungry for you to get there, because you put money in their pockets. They system is very grateful... (By the way, we had to take out more than half of what you wrote. A word to the wise: If you can't respect yourself, then at least respect The Beat. What you wrote about that 12-year-old girl was entirely inappropriate...)

Life Wit' out You

Wit'out you life can't go on
That why I ask myself what's life wit'out you my boo
What is life wit'out schoo'
What is life wit'out my boo

Wat is life without me and you
My life wit'out you can't go on wit'out my crew
Life without you ain't right but if you knew
If I had a way to tell you I wouldn't worry about life wit'out you

But now life ain't what you choose
'Cause if so I wouldn't think about anything without you
-Lamecka GU

From The Beat: It may seem like you can't go on without your love, but you are going on. Life has a way of continuing even when we think it should stand still. Why are you without this love? Where is he or she? Does anything about the reasons s/ he is no longer with you make you want to change anything about how you live your life?

Feeling Sad

All this pain make me feel so sad that I cry every nigh. So what I have to do is stay alive.

-Demarcus B2

From The Beat: What caused that pain inside you, Demarcus? Can you make some changes in the way you live on the outs so that you don't have even more reasons to feel sad? (The Beat wants you to choose only one topic to write about each week, not all three. We want to see you focus a lot of attention on just one thing instead of writing one or two sentences on everything... Okay?)

Why Life Is Worth Living

I live life to da fullest for my moms. I try an' do good, but yeah, she love me one way or anothe. So I try and just live, 'cause I'm a live breezy.

-Crackhead GU

From The Beat: This is kind of disappointing after your other standout piece. It doesn't tell us very much. For example, what do you mean you live life to the fullest? Is allowing yourself to get locked up part of living life to the fullest?

Love Your Mom

Tell me why I am still here? I always have hate in me too much. I don't know why. See, I hate my mom but she was the one that has been there for me. Even though I am adopted and people say I am I am lucky. I don't feel like it.

Time and time again I hear myself say that I am worth something even though there are people that tell I am not. It's like they took a piece of cake by cup cake brown. I can relate to the things. So why not you take advise from a book from a person who's been through it all.

Being here has taught me a lot. I never want to me make the same mistakes, even though you should never say never. I would not like to be here.

So the point of saying all of these is that you want to make sure you love your mom and care for her 'cause once she's gone you have no best friend, no one who wants to help you, 'cause this system is real out of place and wants to find something wrong.

-Ab GU

From The Beat: First of all, just keep telling yourself that you are worth something, because of course you are! But you have to know your own value and worth, and it doesn't depend on what others say about you but on what you know about yourself. We're very interested in how you began this piece. You say you hate your mom (and later give advice to love your mom), but you don't provide any explanation. Is she the one who tells you that you're not worth anything? Why do you hate her? Is there any connection between the hate you feel (hate is a powerful emotion that can do more damage to the hater than the one being hated on) and the fact that you are here?

My Smile Faded

Yes I agree because it happened to me before. When the police checked me just because I had on baggy clothes, like thugs wear, so I got harassed by the police. And they didn't even have the right to do that because I was not on probation. I was happy when I heard that I was getting out of YGC, but then my smile faded when I found out I wasn't getting out.

-Young Gutta B1

From The Beat: We know the police hassle a lot of young people for the way they dress, and that's wrong. But we also know that a lot of young people do some pretty foolish things that get them in here. Are you here just because you got harassed, or because you did something that gave them power over your life?

This Pain I Feel

It pains me to see a death on my block because a homie on da block is family. If a homie die, a family member die, and you gotta take that personal and kill da person who did that. It hurt me to find out my brother got shot right in front of his daughter and the fact that I was right around the corner at that.

-King Ice B2

From The Beat: We feel your pain at the loss of your brother, and at the loss of all the brothers and sisters who are dying on our streets. But we don't accept the code that says you have to kill in revenge. We know where this leads — to another mother and brother crying over their loss (while the victim feels no pain at all). If you can justify your killing of another, then the government (the cops, the armies) can justify their killing too. Is it right for you but wrong for them? Will killing the killers really stop the killing, or only make it worse? If we all continue to live by the code, "An eye for an eye," then what is going to be left in the end?

Life Is Worth It

Why life is worth living? It's worth living' because for me I like the feeling of waking up every day knowing that I gotta another day to look forward to. Going to school, seeing the homies, my family, moms, pops and ill bro's.

-Jason B2

From The Beat: Why did you give up this sweet picture of home and family? Do you plan to make any changes when you get out of here so that you don't give your freedom up to strangers again? Like what?

The Turf

Man, I miss tha turf, being on tha turf wit' all ma ninjas. What's so good about tha turf ta me is being wit' ma ninjas holdin' it down, smoking weed, sippin' boa, holdin' guns, sellin' dope, gettin' dough, drivin' cars, chillin' on tha block.

Why I won't leave tha block is I did so much for that block. I got too much love for that block.

-Baby Purp B1

From The Beat: Well, at least you make it very clear in this piece why they won't let you out... and why you're headed right back here when they do!

It's Racist

Yes, I do agree because people do that. For an example, if you at school and you have a test and you are black and you got a 'A' for being smart, your homies say you a punk 'cause we got a F and you got a A! You smart?" And if you always studying and not chillin' wit' your homies, you a punk.

-AE B1

From The Beat: We know this happens, and it makes us mad. Why shouldn't everybody, regardless of race, try to do their best in school, to read and write and do math, so they can move ahead in life?

Racism From Within

I agree 'cause if someone tries to get some intelligence in their life, some other black person talks about you, like calls you a nerd and stuff.

-Donley B1

From The Beat: When people try to hold other people back from advancing their minds, it's usually because they are jealous, and unwilling to do the work necessary to improve their own minds.

Free Me

Wassup Beat? This yo' boy Baby Purp still up in tha hall waitin' to be free. Man, they just don't won't ta let a real ninja like me out. Free Purp! Holla at ya boy, Baby Purp.

-Baby Purp B1

From The Beat: Are you giving them any good reasons to let you out. Do you bear any responsibility for where you are? If they let you out, how long will you stay free?

Comfort Zone!

Mayne, fo' real, my zone is the house knowing that nobody could come in without being harm or worrying about being violated by anybody 'cause my parents is real.

-Jason B2

From The Beat: What do you think you owe your parents? Are you delivering what you owe by letting yourself be taken away from them? What sacrifices are you willing to make for them so that you don't cause them the pain they feel for you right now?

No Smiles

The reason I have no smiles is because of the stupid impulsive decisions that have prolonged me from going home and staying stuck in group homes. Until then you'll see no sign of happiness on my face.

I been away for 16 months. I seen home a couple of times on tha run. But have not been actually free without having to trip over tha cops. So my plan is to just sav out tha time I got to do. Go back to tha house, and school and situate the rest of my life from there.

-Lil' Spitta B1

From The Beat: Well, if you hold to your plan, you should be on a path to a better future. Being impulsive is one of the ingredients of childhood, but it's through the consequences of our impulsive behavior that we move from childhood into adulthood. It sounds like you're ready.

On My Way...

Was good with The Beat? Man, Beat, I got to go to this place in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I don't think that I can stay for how long my PO want me. He want me to stay for 18 months but I don't think that I can stay for that long. I can't see my mom, da 'hood. Free ya boy.

-Chuck B1

From The Beat: The program in Pennsylvania is a good one, Chuck, so we hope you approach it with a little more maturity. Every thing you do (or don't do) has a consequence. The consequence for doing your program will be that you are better prepared to live in a way that keeps you free in the future.

I Remember

I remember when I used to be outside of these walls, when I used to be with my family and friends and always played with my little brother. When I was outside, I always used to think that playing with my brother was annoying, but now that I'm in here, I miss that. But the most thing I miss is bein' by my whole family. And another thing is eat some good-ass food from outside. You already know what I'm talking about.

-Jr B1

From The Beat: Actually, we don't know what you're talking about with that good food. What food do you miss the most? Have you given any thought to the changes you might have to put in place on the outs so that you won't have to miss anyone again? Like what?

It Pains Me To See

It pains me to see my homies pass away
It pains me to see myself locked up
With no freedom away from da family and the homies
It pains me to see da homies locked up
It pains me to see me not holdin' it down right now
For da homies dat held it down for me and passed away
It pains me to see myself away from da 'hood
And it pains me to see
Myself keep comin' back for some stupid stuff

-Jr B2

From The Beat: If it pains you to see yourself making return trips to lock-up for stupid stuff, then why do you keep doing stupid stuff? How much pain do you have to experience before you make the connection to what you are doing to cause it, and put a stop to it? What we see in this piece is a hunger to go back to the very life that brought you here, which is like putting your hand in the fire but not remembering — not learning — that it burns! If you make no changes in your life, you'll be coming back again, or going to much worse places the system has designed for you down the line, and you can write some more about what pains you. What do you think it pains your family to see?

It Pains Me To See

It pains me to see my homies getting killed out there on them streets. It seems like we ain't makin' it to see 21 out here and that's messed up. So whenever I touch back down I'm gone be on my shhh and stay out the way because I'm trying to make it out here in these wicked-ass streets.

-L B2

From The Beat: Yes, these are wicked streets, and we haven't seen them bringing any good to anyone. We applaud you for trying to make a difference in your own life. How are you going to try to make it out there? What plans do you have for yourself?

I Hate The Halls.

Man, I hate being in the halls
When I stretch out my hand touch the walls
Guards in here treat you like shhh
Give you room time for some phony-ass shhh
I can't wait to be on the outs
For I can chill and sit on ma couch
After the day is over I smoke three chops to the face
I get it how I live
It's a everyday struggle to get paid...

-Young Gutta B1

From The Beat: That everyday struggle to get paid has led you to this place where the only money you're making is going into the pockets of the people who are telling you when to sleep, eat, talk, pee, etc. So it doesn't appear that you hate the halls enough...

Turning My Life Around

When I started to get locked up I was 12, and I never stopped. Now I am 16 and I spent five years of my life. But now I am going to turn my life around

-Phoebee GU

From The Beat: It's a great goal to turn your life around after five years of giving up your freedom to the system. But how do you plan to do it? Believe us when we say you need a plan. A decision to do it is the first step, but only the first. What follows after that?

Ticket Out

My ticket out is to leave the bad friends where they come from go meet new friends go places where you know you would stay out of trouble like the movies and stuff you like to do that's my ticket out a ticket out I have is when I get out listen to my grandma and don't be places I don't need to be and go to school and never cut or nothing play sports and do stuff you good at hoops and football that's my ticket out!

- Stuzz, SF B4

From The Beat: So are you gonna do just that? Action speaks louder than words.

Hearing Some Things Make My Smile Disappear

When my smile disappear it's when I hear something that I don't want to hear at all, like when I'm at a fun place and its time to go. That's when the smile goes away. You havin' fun playing and just havin' a good time, then they say, "Let's go," and you not ready to go. That's yo' smile disappear and gone!

-D Stuzz B4

From The Beat: Definitely sounds like a downer.

Ticket Out

My ticket out the game would be when I get some money out this shhh, 'cause without that, we run the streets, and that's what got us in the system where we can't get out. The white man trying to play us. That's why there's no money out there, and that's why we do what we do to try to get that ticket out the game. But Whitey keep us down because they know we're bigger than what do they think we are.

-Young Clap B4

From The Beat: We know things aren't fair, and we know racial discrimination is real, and it hurts young black men a lot. But having said all that, racism alone can't be the only thing going on. If that was true, we wouldn't have back judges, senators, businessmen, cops, teachers, doctors and lawyers, airline pilots — everything, in fact, that white men do. We hope everyone works to eliminate racism, but in the meantime, there must be something else that you have some control over, that you can do to move up without risking everything you have, from your freedom to your life.

Ticket Out

My ticket out is my family because your family is not going to be there forever. They going to move on and go to heaven and you better spend more time with them. You selling drugs on the street and robbin' people and shooting people for stepping on your shoe, it not the thing to do. It just not. It is anotha killing on the street, killing each other family, the same family. So get to know the person. You never know if that person is in your family, and you could make friend wit' them and stuff. And that's my ticket out.

-Ae B1

From The Beat: We agree that the killing on the streets just makes families cry and hurt, and solves nothing. Next time, Anthony, don't write about all three topics. Just pick one so that we can hear more of what you're thinking.

What Makes My Smile Disappear

What makes my smile disappear is when the memories of the homies come up. Me being locked up makes my smile go away. Being away from da family, da girls, do 'hood — that makes my smile go away.

Going to court and the judge telling me my next court date is in a couple of weeks, that really makes my smile go away. All the bad stuff around me and on da homies and family, like cops on us and stuff like dat always makes my smile go away.

-Jr B2

From The Beat: Some of what makes your smile disappear is out of your control (like how the cops treat you and your friends and family). But some of it is within your control, like your participation in what goes down on the street. So, do you think you have any responsibility for not being able to smile? What is your contribution to this sad picture?

My Ticket Out

I will say my newborn girl is my ticket out. My reason is she keep my mind going. She keep me in school. She keep me off the blocks. She keep me wanting more out of life.

She also make me understand life more. And that's a good thing for me because my dad never been there for me to tell me go to school or stay away from people who will get me where I'm at now. That way I'm try to be more than my dad 'cause he's nothing. I want to be someone in life. So I hope my newborn my ticket. out.

-Antonio B5

From The Beat: We hope she's your ticket out too, Antonio, but the fact that you are locked up with a child on the streets is not a good beginning. What we want to know is if she means all that you say she does, how did you forget about her long enough to do whatever it was that led you to this place? We hope when you get out you follow your own fine thinking, and stay in school so that you can be the father your little girl needs.

Freedom's Illusions

Me and Whiteboy went out to partay
Hit da block, got some 'dro and smoked da
Bombay

Got juiced with the Remay
Drank a couple shots with my Hentay,
Bicarday is what they all say
But I say pills is part da remedy,
We in da Bay wit' da sucka free
It's me CITO, Whiteboy and Tony.
Just show me where we need to go,
It's right up da way to da liquor sto'e.

What we need dough I know,
A couple lil' snacks wit da blunt wraps,
Fa sho, let's go.

"Where we to, CITO?"

Wherever we need to go,

5-0 ditch, they yellin' who it is,

I tell 'em CITO,

But Whiteboy, Tony got on and did it movin',

CITO hit da cut freedom's what I'm choosin',

Livin' life, livin' through illusions,

It's a wrap I'm out, a breezy is what I'm doin'.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: With all your attention on alcohol and those drugs you're usin', we hope freedom's what you're choosin' and not for losin'.

Ticket Out

My ticket out the system and off the streets is my education, my mind, the way I think. My ticket out to is the Island Samoa where my other peeps is at. My ticket out of the game is to be a role model to my young ones in the family, to show them to do good.

-Baby Uce B2

From The Beat: These are all excellent tickets out of the situation you're in. But it makes us wonder — with so many inducements out of the streets, from your mind to the young ones in your family and the lure of Samoa, what are you doing here to begin with?

My Ticket Out (A Beat Interview)

Lil' Nacho: All my life, I've always wanted to learn how to read and write.

TBW: What has prevented you from learning to read and write?

LN: The streets

TBW: How have the streets stopped you from learning how to read and write?

LN: The streets showed me how to make money, and I like kicking it with the homies.

TBW: Do your homies know how to read and write?

LN: Some of them do, some don't.

TBW: Have you ever asked one of them to teach you how to read and write?

LN: Nah

TBW: Why not if they are your homies?

LN: 'Cause in the streets, all you think about is getting money, running up on people, and just hoping to see another day.

TBW: Do you enjoy living like this?

LN: Yeah, I do.

TBW: Do you enjoy being locked up because of your gang?

LN: I didn't get locked up because of my gang, I got locked up 'cause people snitched on me. I'm not trippin'. Homies have done time for me. It's a part of the game. You have to be ready to suffer the consequences.

TBW: Do you see yourself bangin' for the rest of your life?

LN: I'm going to bang, but I want to change. Once you're jumped in, there's no turning back. I want to start working and making money the right way so I can help my family.

TBW: So, that's why you need to learn to read and write. You need to spend more time in school than out on the streets.

(To Be Continued...)

-Lil' Nacho B2

From The Beat: Thanks for granting us this interviewing, Lil' Nacho. We want to address just two things about what you said. First, you are wrong when you say that there's no way out of the gang. We know far too many people (older than you, and in much, much deeper than you) who have made the break successfully. It isn't easy, but then the life you're living (and the consequences you're paying) isn't easy, either. But the second thing is literacy. We want you to be able to read and write, because without those basic skills, you're going to find it very hard to live except outside the law (and inside places like this, and worse). So, besides the advice to go to school, what can we do to help you? Can we bring you easy-to-read books and help you with them? What kind of stories are you interested in? When you say you can't read, do you mean you can't read at all, or that you have difficulty? These are things that can be overcome, and we strongly urge you to make the effort. We'll help in any way we can.

Ticket Out

My ticket out this sick-ass life is now I am on my way to have a baby so I have to do better things in life for myself and my people for I will be there for the baby and don't be like the people that's not there for their kids. To keep it real with you, I'm happy this my ticket out 'cause all I would of did was end back up in here or the fed's two places that cannot do shhh for me.

An' for my young homie, do this shhhh an' get it over with for you can come home. This not for us.

-J-Stubba B4

From The Beat: We wish we could understand why it took bringing a new child into the world for you to recognize — or act on your recognition — that life is the great treasure. But if having a baby suddenly opens your eyes, then you've become more than just a child with a child. So, when you're tempted to do the things that could end in you being taken from her or him, we hope you never forget how important you are and will always be in that baby-to-be's life.

Time To Smile

From time to time I get that smile from probably seeing a fine sexy lady come in to the unit, and from the girls' unit. But if they leaving out the unit, it put a frown on my face with the quickness, like, "Damn, wait till I get out." What triggers the smile to a frown is like, I can't have her. Smile into a frown in YGC ninja!

-Baby Uce B2

From The Beat: Uce, we left out a couple of things because they were inappropriate for The Beat (as you know). But what we put in tells us that you put the frown on your own face. If you weren't locked up with a bunch of boys (because of whatever it was that gave the system the power to lock you up), you could have been with all the girls you want. You made your choice, so now you have to live with it.

The Queen Of The Universe

People have me drop a smile because of the stupid things they do. People make me do things I would never do. As in peer pressure does. A lot on my mind, so I need a female to keep me going the right way. It's not drugs or money but it's a female, the queen of the universe. I'm not talking about just black girls, all races of females.

-Young Pop-Up B4

From The Beat: We like your respectful tribute to females, and we can understand why your thoughts go there. But when you turn to anyone to keep yourself from falling under the pressure of peers, you are overlooking the one person who exercises the greatest power over your decisions, and that's you! Of course, it would be best to have a person to help keep you on the track you choose, but unless you're committed to it, it doesn't matter whose support you have.

Nothing More Racist Than That?

I understand what he was talking about because I've done it before going to a interview and had to act "white" as Reverend said. But in the end I got the job so hey! I wasn't trippin' feel me! So yeah, but I don't think it's wrong because for a black man you gotta beat the system and just do whatever, so yeah.

-J Man B2

From The Beat: But why do we say that conducting yourself respectfully at a job interview is "acting white"? Are all white people respectful? Do they all wear proper clothes and speak well? If we accept the term "acting white," aren't we setting up some expectations (negative ones) about what it means to "act black"? Anyway, congratulations on getting that job!

Being Here Makes My Smile Disappear

There's a lot of things that make my smile disappear, like not wanting to see my family whenever I want because I'm locked up, or not able to see my son because I'm in here. Another reason that really makes my smile disappear is seeing my mom crying every time she comes to see me.

-Jokes B4

From The Beat: We can see only one way to prevent the sadness you feel in here, and that's not to give the system the power over your life to put you here.

Time To Go Home

I'm always lookin' out my screen waitin' for the right time,
maybe I can come outside if I say the right line.
I'm locked up but it seems I'm always down,
depressed sad and shhh, thinkin' about mama now.
I wish I can go home, I'm tired of bein' here.
I know you here me lord, I'm sayin' it loud and clear.
It's hard to write with no damn light.
I'm in my room now dark as darkest night,
I'm tryin' to fight but there's no way I can win
I'm still gonna try but there's no way I'ma sin,
It now begins. No more bein' bad and locked up
Forget it, you know what's up,
CITO, don't try your luck.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: We don't think things are as dark for you as you're presenting them. We see a light that comes right out of your eyes, so you are already winning. We think you've already unlocked your own mind, and that is the hardest cell to crack.

It's Love

The lord sent me a woman from the heavens above
I knew it was her, 'cause as soon as I seen her I fell in love
This love was doubtful, I couldn't tell it was real
until I lost her... Man, some things were revealed
but it was unclear what my feelings were for her
She made me feel sad inside like I told somebody some racial slurs
But I guess I did really just insult her
I told her I'm sorry but it didn't get to her
Really, Baby, I know what you're worth
You're worth a lot more than anything in this world
It hurt inside, just to let it ride
I couldn't decide what you wanted for us
You chose what you thought what was right for us
But you thought wrong 'cause us together is definitely a plus
Plus don't try to take away the love from your heart towards me
It's ok, I'ma just be me

-Cito B4

From The Beat: We're not sure what is meant by this love poem. Apparently you hurt the girl you love and she isn't ready to forgive you. Besides sweet words, what do you plan to do to show her you're not going to insult her again?

What Makes Your Smile Disappear

What makes my smile disappear is being stuck in here. Being away from my girlfriend, family and friends. The reason why that makes my smile go away is because loving someone so much and being with them every second of your life, and it's so hard being away from them for a day. It's just the fact that you're looking at yourself and just saying, "Why I do this and why I do that?" It's just the fact of looking down at yourself and just wondering why?

-Et B2

From The Beat: So, when you ask yourself these questions — why am I here and what can I do to stop coming here — what answers come out of your head? If you're looking at yourself and wondering why, then you're using your mind in a way that can get you unstuck. That's why we're interested to know what your mind is answering.

Thinking About How I Hurt Moms

I mostly think about my mom when I think about my family. When I think about my mom it bring a smile upon my face because I reminisce about the good times I always had with moms. But then my smile disappears when I think about what I've done and how I have hurt my mother in all types of ways, but never verbally or physically.

-Lil' Nicoya B4

From The Beat: It's good that you haven't hurt your mother physically or verbally, but it's not good that you have hurt her at all. So tell us, how have you hurt her,

Customizing My Comfort Zone

A comfort zone for me would just me in my room, listenin' to my music or playing around on my computer.

-Rosanne GU

From The Beat: Now that you're outside of your comfort zone in a place not so comfortable, do you try to create a comfort zone in your head — and a plan that will keep you from being taken out of your real comfort zone in the future?

Run, Run, Run, Then Just Chill

Hey, I am back from running away from Log Cabin Ranch. My lawyer is taking it to trial so I won't go to CYA. I ran at 9:00 in the morning on Wednesday. I ran up the mountain and just chilled at the water tower. Then I saw the sheriff came and then I continue to chill up there. Let's say I wanted to get caught so I could come back here.

I think YGC is better than the Ranch 'cause we don't have to work as hard. I felt like a slave there 'cause we worked for free when we were supposed to be getting paid for what we do. And I wasn't getting in enough counseling. The therapist only saw me once a week for one hour. Even my lawyer and my PO think the Ranch is bs.

And I was tired of a certain counselor pushing us with exercise. Especially when one other resident mess up, the whole Ranch get punished. That just ain't fair. So I ran with 20 bucks that my grandpa gave me.

I wanna say wus sup to people at the Ranch that showed me respect. Peace out to LCRS.

-Weapon B4

From The Beat: So your plan was to get caught and brought back to YGC? You're one of the few people we've met trying to get in here! AT LCRS, did some people get paid for their work and others not? Or was doing that kind of work part of the program for everyone? We're sure there are good and bad counselors, just like there are good and bad everything, but we're not sure that running from your problems is a very effective strategy in the long run.

About Me

I'm steady tryin' to find my task
I got wrapped hella quick hella fast
I wish I could take it back
Doin' time so much they won't let me relax
CITO blowin' 'dro to da max
Can't stop no way, don't get high fast
Class, no don't got none of that
CITO gets money I don't need no gats
Pull the bats, that's all I ask
Let me tell you what the moral of the story is
It's about CITO blowin' 'dro gettin' high till the morning ends.
CITO workin' hard to be set free
Been wearing green fa five months like it's meant fo' me
I'm just tryin' to fulfill my destinies
Smoking 'dro, puttin' pills in the drank, thats the remedy
CITO off the mike w'at's callin' me
Nothin', just the 'dro, the weapons, the pills, the dank, my freedom, and the rest of me.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: But CITO, if you keep putting all your faith in drugs and alcohol as "da remedy," you'll be putting your good sense under the influence of chemicals which mess with your good sense — and have the very real potential of stripping your freedom once again, leaving you screaming, "Where's the rest of me?" A friend once told us, "There's no problem that alcohol can't make worse." Think about while you still have a sober mind.

Dark Day

Verse #1

Dark days, dark ways, dark places
Dickies on, white tee, k swiss with my colored
laces
I'm on rampage through to the Beat pages
Got no time for no suckas, wanna be's or haters
Back in the day I used to go insane
'Cause I got straight rider in my blood line don't
hate on me man
Long hair, evil eyes, I'm on the one that terrorize
The San Francisco streets
And by no female I ain't never been mesmerized
I need a female with a nice shape
Long hair, nice legs, thighs, and has a pretty face
A young Latina mixed with black savage
I'm coming outta my shell to deliver you suckas
damage

Chorus

Dark days fill my pass
I'm coming out so you better think fast
I'm not showing no love 'cause I got a cold heart
Book smarts and book to rip your lyrics apart

Verse 2

I got evil eyes and I'm from the Bay
San Franspycho Killafornia is where I lay
Puerto Rican is what I am
Mexican is what I am
Black is what I am
And black-an-Brown is my fam-bam San
Francisco native
Rolling in Chevy's, 'lacs, and stolen Civics
But enough on that I told you I'm going to come
back
Reality check part four
Lil' shadow is back.

-Lil' Shadow B4

From The Beat: Evil eyes? We don't see 'em. We see someone whose eyes might become dim if he has to spend too much time out of the sunshine and in places like this. When you say "Lil' Shadow is back," do you mean back in the halls? If so, that's a sad comment on your life. If that's not what you mean, then you really do need a reality check.

My Smile Disappear

What makes my smile disappear is a female that's hellu ugly or someone in my family get hurt or get killed or one of my closest friend get shot or killed.

-Al Bundy

From The Beat: Yeah, we can understand about the family tragedies. But what is ugly and what is beautiful? Have you ever met a female you thought was beautiful, but the more you got to know her, the uglier she seemed? Or, have you looked at some females and thought they were ugly, only to see real beauty in them after you got to know them?

Too Much Worth Living For

Man, I tell you like this. Life is too much worth living for 'cause people like me have a lot of people they have to be there for. Now I am going to have a baby, so I need to be here for him or her for I can show him or her how much life is worth living for, an' how to do things that's I didn't do, and don't come to a place like this. And they can show their kids the same thing.

-J-Stubba F-baby B4

From The Beat: Now that you're about to be a father, how will you teach your child or son what you haven't yet taught yourself? We hope you make the changes you know you have to make, since kids learn by watching and mimicking what they see.

Racist People

I think that racist people is bad because humans should be treated equally.

-Marcus

From The Beat: You really put a lot of effort and thought into this, didn't you? Why should people be treated equally? Do you treat people equally?

In Gear

Cover my tracks wit' budda so where tha bread be
I say beef is dead meat
Collect the president, yeah me
No one scare me
And you ain't gotta double dare me
Hear me loud and clearly
Rats aren't near me
Wire tap ninja
Get blood in they ear piece
Catch up bezzie I'm in gear
Zoom
Gone
See ya piece

-G-C B4

From The Beat: If this is a call out to declare yourself a "down gangster," then consider yourself declared! We had to take what we didn't understand out because of the part we do understand. And what we understand is that you are announcing your intentions to continue down the same path that brought you here. If we are wrong about that, please set us straight in a more straight-forward poem...

How sick I Am of YGC

I'm so sick of coming to YGC. This is the stupid shhh. I do not need to be here now. I feel like going crazy when I am in my room. I get so mad at myself I want to hurt people a lot. I just want to talk to my mom and get her support a lot of time. I feel no one can talk to me when I am in here the way I talk to people when I am on the outs. Like I can talk to the people I don't know. I just like doing that a lot of the times.

-Mac-D B4

From The Beat: If you're angry at yourself for doing the "stupid shhh" that led you to give away your freedom, then why do you want to hurt other people? How will hurting them make you less angry at yourself? If you know what your responsibility for getting yourself here is, then you also know what you have to do, responsibly, to stop coming here. It's not about other people. It's about you. We read a lot of statements of young people saying they are sick of coming here, but then we see them again. When will you get so sick of this place that you won't be making a return visit?

My Goals

Go to school
Go with my first mind
Stop stealing (my first thing to do)
Don't run away
Be respect to my helpers (for an example, my Nana)
Being a new and move to Sac and come see my boyfriend on the weekends
Have a good 16th birthday
And last but not least, try to go to church every day
Still work at girls 2000

-No Name GU

From The Beat: Have you achieved any of your goals yet? What are you doing to achieve them? Have you made promises like this before? What will be different this time?

My Big Bra

Well, my big bra got took from the block and I can't see him no more. I miss him a lot but I can't let that hold me down. I'm going to just keep my head up and wait till he do his time in the joint.

-Young Sparkie B2

From The Beat: Was it a surprise when your brother got taken to prison? If it was, then you'd better check yourself, because you are now suffering similar consequences, and you should be able to see where the path your on leads. How long will he be in the pen? And exactly what do you mean when you say, "I'm going to just keep my head up and wait till he do his time in the joint?" When that time comes, are you planning to do things with him that you shouldn't be doing? Are you planning to change anything about what you've been doing? Do you think he will be changed by the experience? Will you?

Waiting For Court

I had a smile on my face when me and my friends were hanging out by the Metreon. My smile went to frown when I ended up in a police station. We was having a good time the whole day until that happened. Now I'm in YGC waiting on my court day.

-Steven B4

From The Beat: If part of "having a good time the whole day" included doing things that lead you here, then you'd better find other ways to have a good time. Sometimes we have to give up what makes us happy for a minute in order to avoid the consequences that make us unhappy for a lot longer.

Musty Females

One thing that makes my smile go away is when a female be hellu musty and hellu stuck up and on some other-ass type shhh.

-Reeses-C-Cup B5

From The Beat: Well, as long as you're locked up with a bunch of boys, this isn't one of your problems...

Ticket Out

I needa stop being so hard-headed. I neva listen. I like following my own rules which never seem to get me anywhere. I basically do illegal thangs to get money, but there are rules I gotta go by... like laws!

Never... nah it took me five times to recognize game. I'm good off getting locked up.

-Crackhead GU

From The Beat: Does this mean that you have learned some things by getting locked up that can keep you from breaking some of those rules? The reality of the situation is that everything you do (and everything you don't do) has consequences. So if you're willing to accept those consequences, then go for it. Just be honest about your own responsibility — both for the bad consequences that come with breaking the laws, and for the good consequences that come from doing the right thing.

When My Smile Disappears

It make my smile disappear when you're not going to see one of your family members anymore because they passed away and they were really close to you. It hurts when you hear they are gone. The other day you was smiling and choppin' it up with them, and boom, they gone, just like that, and that smile turn to a sad and mad frown.

Another time when it made my smile disappear when you find out that your girlfriend had a miscarriage because she fell in the bath tub. She was already stressing because you locked up and she try to put it on you because you locked up not out there with her by her side or caring to her needs. Now that really hurts, 'specially when you really wanted the baby, talking about every day on the phone, trying to find names for your son. She was due in two months. You so excited and happy and then he's gone.

-Berty B5

From The Beat: We can understand why both of these things would bring you down, and we're very sorry, especially that your girlfriend had a miscarriage. Do you think she is right to put some blame on you for not being there for her? Wanting a baby is not enough. You also have to be responsible for the baby you create, and it's impossible to be responsible when you're locked up. We hope that next time you're free, you think about the future and not just the present. That means when you want to do something that can lead you to lose your freedom, then think of what that will mean to the future, including your children. If you can't do that, then you are still living the life of a child yourself, and therefore are not ready to be a father.

How Could You

How would you
Let somebody lay where I lay
How could you give 'em
Everything that we made
How could you call 'em
All the names that you used to call me
How could you, how could you
Just forget about me
How could you teach 'em
All the things I taught you
How could you put 'em
Up to da ghetto karmasutra
How could you put me in da back
And give him the front seat
How could you, how could you
Just forget about me

-Rodnika GU

From The Beat: This is one of those sad poems that leaves us to believe you have learned something the hard way. We wish you never had to learn this lesson (that love can turn and that lovers can be the cruelest people in the world), but it's something that many, many people have had to go through. We believe that the pain you feel now will fade into distant memory when you find yourself in love with the next person who shares your life.

Being Here Is Pain

It pains for me to see myself locked up in here. Everybody at home go different of me knowing that this ain't my character! But hey.

-Jason B2

From The Beat: So, what is your character? And if this isn't it, what are you doing here? (From now on, Jason, please don't write on all the subjects because then we only get one or two sentences on each. Just choose one topic to write about, and write as much detail as you can. Thanks.)

Comfort Zone

My comfort zone would be a quiet place. Me, my dad, my girl. What else would I need? With that, life would be complete. I wouldn't need nothing else.

-Risk B2

From The Beat: You live a simple live Risk. So, what's preventing you from achieving this comfort zone? How have you complicated this picture?

Ticket Out

God... my only ticket out is school because that's been my fallback for the past two years. I blame school for one of the reasons I'm in here now, for real, for real.

-J Man B2

From The Beat: What do you mean you blame the school? You'll have to explain this one to us, J Man.

Comfort Zone

My comfort zone is my mom house! I feel that the house is where someone tucks their pumpkin. Especially my house is tucked.

-D-Mac B1

From The Beat: What do you like most about your mom's house? Do you always feel comfortable there?

The Beat Within

Always coming back
Sometimes I'm thinking it's wack
Reason being because I'm here watching a good movie

Why can't you walk straight past me
I don't think it's weak
It's just that you come at wrong time, Beat.

-Stony B2

From The Beat: There is no "right" time for everyone, Stony. We go to about 50 units a week to conduct Beat workshops. If everyone got to tell us when to come, and when not to come, we'd be writing and rewriting schedules all day long and never doing The Beat. For us, the most important line in your poem is the first line: "Always coming back." Yes, The Beat will always come back, and always at the same time. Sorry about that movie; you'll just have to watch it another time.

Love

What do I think about love? It's something we get when you think you meet the one of your life like me. I think love is a broken heart, that's why I want to meet the one of my life by your ninja Flat Head. For all the lovers out there on the street, I love you. Stay down lovers.

-Flat Head B5

From The Beat: Why do you think love is a broken heart? Have you had your heart broken? Have broken anyone else's heart?

Education: My Ticket Out

My ticket out could and can be my education. I do like to learn a lot about new things.

-Reeses-C-Cup B5

From The Beat: Well, you didn't knock yourself out to write this one, did you? So, what kinds of new things do you like to learn about? Where do you want your education to take you?

Just Do Me

What I want is to just be free. This has taught me that to not mess around no more. I don't need quick money. It's not worth my freedom. I'ma just do me.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: Well, we hope you've truly learned this lesson, CITO. We know how much easier it is inside to recognize important lessons which soon get forgotten when you regain your freedom. We hope that's not what happens in our case.

Smile On My Face

Let me tell you what puts a frown on my face
When these ninjas be disrespecting when I make a mistake
Or when I got to the halls... writin' letters to my broads
Going bad on counselors who won't let me make a call
But on the block I stall
Thinkin' 'bout this good shhhh in B2 unit
Reminisce on 'hood shhh
I'm 'hood rich, and I love my tactics

-Dre B2

From The Beat: We had to take out a couple of inappropriate lines from this poem, Dre. If being here makes you frown, then stop coming here! And if you spend your time here reminiscing about those tactics you love (instead of the changes you need to make to avoid handing your freedom over to counselors you don't like), then we're guessing you like it here more than you're willing to admit since you're writing your ticket to come back.

Reasons For Living

The only reason why I think it's worth living right know is because of my family and because I just had a kid. And that's the only reasons I think my life is worth living

-Jokes B4

From The Beat: You give two reasons for living — family and child — but describe them as "the only reasons," as if you need any more. That's like saying, "I only have diamonds and gold."

Ya Needa Hire Me

Sorry to say, but the response team is lame! I know it's cats our age, but do dey gotta be so square? Sometimes they're annoying... It seems that your response team always tries to remind us that we're locked up. It's bad enough being in our rooms for a dummy minute but The Beat Within is one of our escape to reality.

-Crackhead GU

From The Beat: Maria, first of all, we appreciate your feed back and honesty about our responses. What you have to remember, though, is that our so-called "response team" are people who have been through the system: juvenile hall, YA, county jail, and even the pen. So when they read your pieces, they remember how they were before they went into the system, and they know without some changes, you'll be following them. And nobody wants that. The Beat Within is not meant to be an escape from reality, but a path back into the world. Those who are taking The Beat and their lives seriously get major props and respect. We are not here to remind y'all that you're locked up — except those who need reminding.

My Future Makes Life Worth Living

Why life is worth living? Life to me is worth living because of my future and what my future holds, like having bigger responsibilities. One would be to have kids or have a job. Or having money or a big house. But I don't really know why my life is worth living!

-Snoopy B1

From The Beat: What about your present, Snoopy? What's going on in your life right now that makes you value your life? We hope that you will have those kids you want, but only after you get your education and a job that will let you be a true father to your children. What kind of job would you like?

It's bad enough being in our rooms for a dummy minute but The Beat Within is one of our escape to reality.

Dream Come True

One day my dreams will come true
One day God would open up doors for me and you
One day the grass will be green
One day we will be free
One day my dreams will fade
One day the Lord and I will pray
One day me and my friends will play
One day I will be very crazy and in a daze

-Meka GU

From The Beat: Your dreams are in your hands. It is up to you if you want to make them come true or not. It is also up to you to set yourself free, Meka.

Family Equals To Life Worthy Living

Why I think life is worth living is because my family is the most important of everybody so they have to come first. So that mean I can't leave my home. If I do I will be missed by my family.

-Demarcus B2

From The Beat: So why did you allow the system to take you from your family? What do you have to do to avoid this situation in the future?

This Pain

It pains me to see that my bra is gone
It pains me to see I am back in here
It pains me to see that ninjas not eating
It pains me to see people locked up like dogs

-J-Stubba B4

From The Beat: Are there things that pain you, which you can do something to change? Like what?

My Smile Left Me

When I got my first X-Box I was very happy. I had got in trouble in school the next day with my teacher, and they called my mom. She wouldn't let me play wit' my X-Box. I was very mad.

-Donley B1

From The Beat: Did your mom's punishment make you act better in school?

Ticket Out

They way I look at this is the only ticket out the game is to get an education or play sports or just stay low.

-Young Sparkie B2

From The Beat: So, are you going to take one of these tickets (or all of them) as your way out? Or are you planning on staying in?

My Smile Disappears

If you just get out of jail and you walking down the street and you see somebody doing the same thing you got in jail for, and you just get sad.

-Ae B1

From The Beat: What else brings your smile down?

What Makes Your Smile Disappear

The things that make my smile disappear is when the homies get killed. Because one day you can be wit' yo' homies and a few hours later, they can get killed. And at first you can be happy and later you will be sad, make and ready to kill. So whatever you into you should stop before you or your next homie get killed.

-Hot Rod B2

From The Beat: Well said, Hot Rod. We hope you will take your own excellent advice, and turn your life around.

Dear Mama

Dear mama I been going through some thangs
The only way I can show you is by blowin' out my brains
I'm tryin' to maintain but da game still da same
You said there's gonna be sun, but I'm still seeing rain
Look into my heart and see blood, hell, and pain
And I know you always worrying, but yo' boy's never lame
Dear Mama

-Fall-Tee B2

From The Beat: We feel the anger, pain and frustration in this sad poem to your mama, but we want to tell you why we think she's right (which is another way of saying why we think you must overcome this situation and live on). When she says that the sun will come out one day, she means that you should not judge your whole life by the snapshot you take today. Even when that snapshot brings you nothing but tears, you have to hold onto the certainty that the future doesn't have to be the past, and that the photo of tomorrow (in the moving picture that is your life) will bring you reason to smile and even rejoice. But the only way to get there is by moving forward. Keep telling yourself that you can do it. Your mama has lived more years than you. She knows some things. Respect what she's telling you.

SANTA CRUZ

The Beach

I like to go to The Triangle Beach on West Cliff during sunny days. I wish that people who aren't quite so eye pleasing wouldn't go there without clothing. I enjoy sunbathing at the beach.

My worst memory at the beach is that I was tanning and I fell asleep lying on my stomach. Now my whole back and butt is burned. It feels great! Not really.

-Saundra

From The Beat: Where do you suggest we go, those of us who aren't 'quite so eye pleasing'? We hope your back

Complicated

My life became complicated because I like to drink alcohol. Blah.
I don't like to write. Why? Because it's stupid.
Why is it stupid? Because it is.
Why is writing stupid? Writing isn't stupid. Making me write is stupid.

-Guy

From The Beat: OK, how can we provide you with more intelligent alternatives, that involves writing, or drawing a picture? We'd really like to know.

Blurbs

I was reading a comic book about a man who got a ribbon for his poems, and a certificate for having a healthy skull. And he was proud that his son wore a helmet to protect his skull. I read the blurbs on the back of the man's book. A lot of people liked his good works.

-Jergo

From The Beat: But did you read any of the man's poems? And what was the name of that comic book?

Love

Love is something to be cherished, a feeling that takes over the body and mind. However, such a feeling can go, just as easy as it comes. By that I mean you can love your girl so much, but your actions often get in the way of the relationship. Especially when you're using... because you make bad choices and do stupid stuff.

I loved my girl to death but I thought I was over it because our relationship was not working out. Key words - I thought - I thought I was over it until I heard about her actions with other guys. Then I thought to myself, that's my girl. I love her and I don't want to throw away what we have just so she can go out and do stuff with guys that don't care about the girl I'm in love with, you know? So that's why you should look at what you have before you give up or throw away something you love or care about.

-Josh

From The Beat: True enough, but sometimes we have to learn it the hard way.

Behind The Laughter

Behind the laughter I cry. Sometimes I feel like I want to die. But I always stand tall and never fall. I stand tall with my back against the wall. I am locked up for some funk in the hood, but if I could start over, I certainly would.

-Thinking

From The Beat: Cool poem. This is what would be called a prose poem, in rhyme. By the way, someday, someday, you will get that second chance. Or is it a third or a fourth chance?

The Way I Am

Most of my family can't really see me for the way I am. They talk a lot of shhh. To me it's nothing, because I don't really ask them for a damn penny. But my mom is everything. It's those brothers and sisters of hers. But no matter what, I give a damn. That's the way I am.

-Diego

From The Beat: You keep giving a damn, and do what's asked of you. You'll get another chance. Make your mother proud, and surprise those aunts and uncles.

Tears Shed

Tears have been shed and time has been lost running into the same wall over and over again, wondering when our pain will come to an end. The only answer the heart can accept, and be given is when we choose to be happy.

-Lil' One

From The Beat: We hope you choose to be happy.

The Day My Hat Burned Up

I read a book.
I talked to a dictator.
He showed no compassion.
I found a skull, next to a footprint.
My farm went on for miles.
I took a nap,
and drank some coffee.

-Shane

From The Beat: A very interesting poem. We would like to know more about the dictator, and that mysterious skull. But that's what some poems do. They leave us wondering.

Behind The Laughter

When I hear the laughter and think of the face behind it, I mainly think of someone who is phony, because I've been tricked too many times in my life.

And it's mainly by friends who I thought were real. It's all right though. It's their loss. Once I get out I will be doing right choices. Ok then. 'Til next time.
Alrato.

-B

From The Beat: OK, you do those right choices. The last laugh, as they say, will be yours.

Livin' To Save My Momma

My momma's all caught up in drugs
Crystal meth is the name
She introduced me to the streets
And now everybody's ashamed
I care about my momma
I need to save her life s
She keeps on runnin' and runnin'
I can't understand why
Death is something I fear
That's why I'm livin'
Just to save my mommas life

-Lil' Skizz

From The Beat: People under the control of crystal meth really need a lot of help to break that powerful addiction. The only way you can help your momma is to help yourself. And that's just what you're doing.

Last Time I Seen You

It's been a minute since I seen you. The last time I seen you was in my room on my bed. It was like the best night I've had at that "one place." The last words you said to me were, "Write me back," and you gave me a hug and a kiss. Well, I miss you and I hope your doing good.

-Pooh

From The Beat: Did you write him/her back?

Holding My Tongue

Wha' it do, Mayne? It's ya girl Lil' Zillah. I'm doing coo'. I'm jus' irritated right now because it gets hard being in a house full of females. I'm really trying to hold my tongue because I'm the type of female that fight a lot

Now I'm really trying to change because I really don't want to get kicked out of this program. I came here to do my program and can't let no one control of that because I'm me. But that's it.

-Lil' Zillah

From The Beat: Here's the thing, Lil' Zillah. Every time you succeed in controlling yourself when you want to go off, you get stronger. And every time you get stronger, you make it easier not to react the next time. If you can have enough self-discipline in here to say out of the beef, then you can control yourself on the streets, too.

Dear . . .

Dear You,

Why did you have to hurt me dis way? Why did you have to use me dis way? You said you will protect me and always be by my side, but where you at now when I need you da most?

Why did you have to hurt me dis way? You said you were my friend but you turn me into a fiend. I always ask myself why did I give into your stupid-ass lies 'cause now you destroyed my life!

I just want to tell you that you didn't win dis time 'cause you'll be da one to do da time! I am here getting my life together. Why did you hurt me this way? This home girl is out. Alrato till next time

-Smokey

From The Beat: We're sorry this person hurt you, Smokey. All we can say is that there's no way to avoid getting hurt in life, so we hope you learn from the experience so the next time you might be better prepared. The only other thing we can say is that nobody destroyed your life because your life is not over. You are still writing your life, so there may be a chapter about getting hurt and feeling it, but then there'll be other chapters about overcoming hurt and succeeding.

I Am Someone

My life is worth living to prove all of those wrong who doubted me and said I would not amount to nothing because I am someone.

-Kalie

From The Beat: You don't have to prove that you are someone. You ARE someone!

Why It's Worth Living

'Cause I am that seed with a million of dreams
Which I know I'm going see
I'm here for a really good reason

-Ms. Littles

From The Beat: Could you share one or two of those millions of dreams with The Beat?

Anger

Anger, coming through my veins
Anger, hurting innocent people
Anger, covering my pain
Anger

Anger, got me going insane
Anger, a part of my pride — is that pride or am I covering my pain and misery

Anger, please don't call mommy those messed up names

Anger, don't take that old lady purse
Anger, slow down, think before you act.
She did nothing wrong.

Why you slapping Mac Dre song
Life is full of excitement, forgot that
Now anger look where you got me 25 to life
Control your anger

-Lil' Zillah

From The Beat: We had to take out one or two lines, Lil' Z, because they aren't Beat appropriate. But the point you are making about anger is absolutely true. Control your anger or it will control you.

Hoping You're Not Just Another Guy

So you're gone
You ran
I ask about you
I have so many question
Like where are you?
Are you ok?

But no
None

Question are still here

After

Before

Now

I talk about the pitcher

How nice you were

And am I going to see you again

No

Not again

No pain

But yes, some guilt

Guilt for hoping you're not just another guy

Because yes I do like you

-B-Eyes

From The Beat: Next time, maybe you can tell us why you like him? Is he special, or just another guy?

Why Oh Why!

Why oh why do I continue to lie
Why oh why do I sit and want to die

Why oh why do I always cry

Why oh why must I cry and lie

Or why oh why do I still want to die

Why is all I can say

Why do I feel like shame

Why oh why do I continue to play games

Why oh why am I filled with so much rage

Why must I feel locked in a cage

Why oh why do I feel the urge to die

Why oh why is my life filled with lies

Why oh why is my life filled with so many question of why

Why oh why must I continue...

-Jeannie

From The Beat: Part of the answers to your questions is that you are alive, and being alive leads to a lot of "why" questions. But if you feel shame, then you should stop doing what you're ashamed of. If your life is filled with lies, stop lying. If you're filled with rage, then stop and look at it. Stop running from it (drugs was just one way to run from it).

When you realize that much of your rage is the result of things, which you had no control over, you might be able to get out from under it.

Don't Question Our Love

I wish I can do something to make him understand.

My love for him will never be the same I can never share it with another man

Oh man, I miss him so

Laying on his chest hearing his heart beat so smooth and slow

Asking God in my head, "Please don't ever let him go, this is the one for me

Please make him understand that I love him so, we're meant to be"

The way his whole body rap around me just so perfect as I close my eyes

Knowin' that this is our life, it can never be the same

So we might as well get through this pain

Thinking about it ain't doin' nothing but settin' us back from our happiness

So like we say, forget the rest of the world.

It's me and you boy, I'm yo' girl

wish I can go back and change my whole life

Just to make sure yo' heart is all right.

Take you away from this drama I caused

Still standin' tall being the man

Telling me you don't care what people say

'Cause they're not worth our day

What do I have to do to make you understand?

I can never share this soul with another man

It's only for you, you, you. Do you understand?

Stop questioning our love....

You make my smile turn up side down...

-Gis

From The Beat: We have a word or two of caution to put in front of you. If you're involved with someone who is not as committed to the relationship as you, who questions your love, then maybe it isn't love that you're dealing with. All relationships take work, and all relationships based on love have their ups and their downs. We hope this is just that emotional roller coaster you're experiencing, and that this works out for you.

What Is Pain?

Pain to me is when you feel more than what you expect

Pain to me is what you usually regret

Pain to me is when you later get upset

Pain to me is when I feel it's a life threat

J-Gon

From The Beat: You've really thought through what pain means to you, J-Gon. Can you give The Beat examples of when you felt so much negative emotion that it surprised you? What lessons have pain taught you? Write about it and let us know?

Happiness

My life is worth living to find happiness

Happiness is seeing my family happy

Happiness is being free

Some of the decisions I make leave me sad

My family is disappointed with me

My freedom is gone, because I'm locked up

I live to make my life better and to find my happiness.

-Trang,

From The Beat: That's pretty unselfish of you, to put your family's happiness before your own, at least in this poem, Trang. Apparently you thought about yourself first when you messed up and got arrested, right? Well, it sounds like you've learned a valuable lesson. We hope you have the insight and strength to resist the temptations next time you're free. Good luck.

It Pains Me

It pains me to see my mom and girl cry, after some of the things I have done. It really hurts me right after visits to see my mom leave crying, because if I keep gettin' locked up or because I keep doin' dumb shhh. It hurts me after I get off the phone and she crying. The worst part is when I go to my room and that's all I can think about.

-That Pain

From The Beat: Thanks for being so honest. Does the sight and sound of your mom crying affect you profoundly enough, so when you're free again, you'll resist doing whatever brought you to juvi-hall? What are you going to do to stop making them cry? Have you thought about making a change? If not, this is the right time.

It Pains Me To See . . .

It pains me to see how I be messing up. Well, I'm not messing up too bad--this my first time in juvy, you dig? But I been getting into a lot of trouble fo' reals, but the rollers been letting me fake get away. It pains me to see how I stopped going to school, just because I was messing wit' witches.

It's pain me to see that my "Giant" has messed up, 'cause I might not see him no more, 'cause I'm a get transferred to my county and I'm a have to wait. It pains me to see that I might be doing a couple of months over some dum ass shhh. You a Giant. But o well. I really fell fo' you.

-Dar' Meisha

From The Beat: Why are you getting yourself in trouble? How do rollers let you get fake away? Why are you having mess with other young women? And, especially, why are you sabotaging your precious education over some funk with other ladies? You already know the answer or you wouldn't have written this piece. Stop this mess now, get out of the streets and go back to school! You're a smart lady; you don't need to create any more dumb stuff in any body else's or your own life!

My Boo

I was walkin' down the street
And I heard something sweet
Turned around an' there you were
And right then I started to care

I know our love is true

I'd do anythin' fo' you

And you'd do anything fo' me

How I see

That you were meant fo' me

An' I was meant fo' you

You'll always be my boo

You look at me; I look at you

You smile; I smile

You ride fo' me; I'm a ride fo' you

When I get out, den you'll get out soon

Now what should we do?

Don't wanna be wit' you in jail

But what can I say?

I'm really feelin' you

We talk here and there

It seems so unfair

I really wanna be wit' you

So tell me what you wanna do?

-Unknown

From The Beat: Nice poem! We hope you both get out and remain out together. Are you willing to do that? About him? Remember The Beat Within is more than just a poem to another person. Step up and teach and leave the mush for that special one!

Why I Live

Why is life worth living? For me it is because to see my own kids grow up and to tell my kids and not do the things I did in my life, and for my brother and my girl. If I tell you what I've been through--people have died because the pain in their lives and the things they've seen in the life that I've seen! Like no one that loves you like my mom and dad, and almost all you' family, but my brother is the only one that loves me.

And my baby girl, she is like my wife. She is like my angel in my life, and my brother, too. I love them a lot. If they die, I don't now what I'm going to do. They are all everything to me!!!

-Joker

From The Beat: You're lucky to have a family and a lady who loves you. Why aren't you home with them now? They probably need you home as much as you need to be there with them, so once you're free again, we hope you'll stay home!

Pain

It pains me to see my mom cry

It pains me to see my girl cry

It pains me to see my sisters

Seeing me go through this path

It pains me to see my lil' brother

Cry every time I get locked up

It pains me to see me coming

Back to this pain

-Unknown

From The Beat: Part of the worst thing about messing up, getting arrested and going to juvy is the anguish your family goes through. It must be easy to forget to think about that when you're considering doing whatever, right? Next time you're out and may be tempted to do whatever again, will your knowledge of how it will affect your family help you gain the strength to resist? We hope so!

Going To Placement

To The Beat. I'm saying what's up? This is Gus. But it real Joker. Homes, it's messed up home. But I'm hooked up. Now I'm going to placement for a year, because something I will work on. Al rato, homes.

-Joker

From The Beat: We hope going to placement will help you. What do you think you should learn to keep yourself out of any mess? What are your plans?

Last Time

I been locked up

Too many times

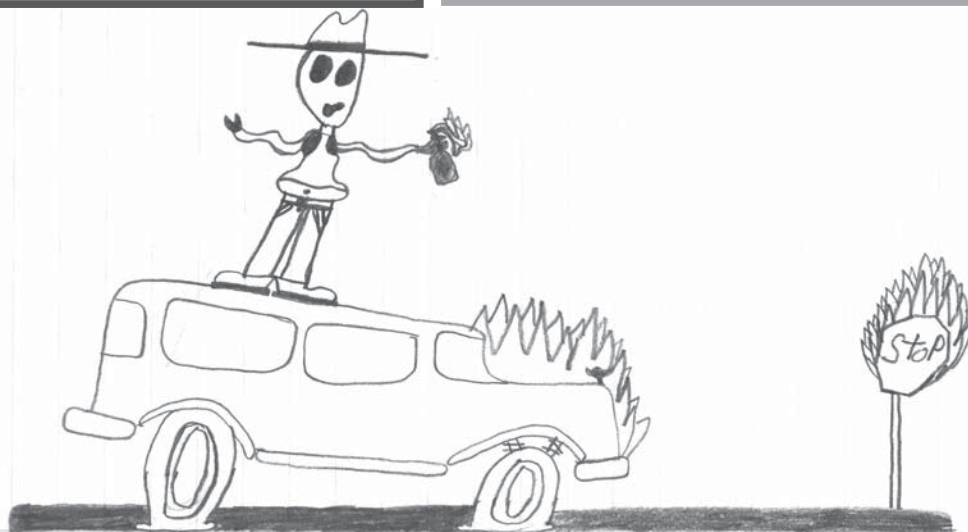
This is my last time

I'm gonna start

Doing good

-Nima

From The Beat: Really? We're looking forward to that? What will you be doing upon your release to stay out?



Why is life worth living? For me it is because to see my own kids grow up and to tell my kids and not do the things I did in my life, and for my brother and my girl.

Detras De La Risa

A mí no me gustan que me digan cosas que no es verdad y que despues se rían detras a mi espalda. Yo he conocido muchos hablan detras de uno y a mi me dan ganas de ponerles unos golpes en la boca para que no lo hagan otra vez.

From The Beat: ¿Crees que esa sea la solución para que los que hablan detras de la espalda de unos cambien su forma de ser? Deberías de enfocarte en otras cosas mas que lo otros dicen o hacen.

Behind The Smile

I don't like for people to tell me things that are not true and then for those same people to laugh behind my back. I have met several people who talk behind one's back and it gives me the urge to give them a couple of shots in the mouth so they don't do it again.

-Jose B1
From The Beat: Do you believe that this is the solution to make those who talk behind people's backs change the way they are? You should focus your time on other things than just worrying about what others say or do.

En Mi Camino A USA

Soy de Mexico DF. A los ocho años me sali de mi casa y me meti a una pandilla local que actualmente sigue rifando. Me meti a esa pandilla porque me dijeron que a los morros que se metían si querían el Oso lo llebaba a los Estados Unidos solo por 500 dolares. Nos permitia que les pagáramos hasta que tubieramos trabajo.

Nos fuimos en el burro (un viejo tren que pasa por Mexico). El Oso nos dijo, "chamacos aquí nos bajamos." Pense que estábamos en el U.S.A, pero estábamos en Nogales Sonora. Luego caminamos solo ochos días por el monte. Solo eramos cinco. continuara...

From The Beat: ¿Qué pasó? ¿Despues de tanto tiempo y tantas cosas en el camino, como pudisters tirar todo a la basura. ¿Si te llegan a dar otra oportunidad de quedarte, la tomarías seriamente? Nos tienes que contar el resto. Expresiones como estas son las que nos gustan escuchar.

On My Journey To The U.S.A.

I'm from Mexico D.F. At the age of eight, I left my home and I got myself jumped into a local gang, which I actually continue reppin' to this day. I got myself jumped into that gang because I was told that the youngsters that got themselves jumped in, if they wanted to, the Bear would take them to the United States for just \$500 dollars. They would allow us to pay them back until we had ourselves a job.

We went via the "burro" (an old train that runs through Mexico) The Bear told us, "Fellas, this is where we get off." I thought that we were in the USA, but we were in Nogales, Sonora. . Then we walked just eight days through the mountain. We were just five.

(To Be Continued...)

-Servin B5
From The Beat: What happened? After so much time and so many obstacles on the path, how could you let it all go to waste? If they give you another opportunity to stay, would you take it seriously? You have to tell us the rest. We love to hear pieces like this.

Mi Peor Experiencia

Les voy a contar algo de mi vida que me pasó. Es algo muy feo. Me violaron cuando tenía siete años. Eso fue lo más triste en saber cuando llegas a ser adulto. Por eso tengo un coraje que no me puedo quitar de mi mente. El día que le pase algo igual a mi familia, juro que lo mato. Considero que ellos son cerdos. ¿Por qué no buscan a sus mujeres para hacer eso? Ellos son los que deben de morir. Eso es todo. Cuiden mucho a sus hijos e hijas.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho lo que te pasó amigo. ¿Tubistes la oportunidad de denunciar a esta persona que te hizo esto? Estas personas estan bien enfermas de la mente, y deberían de pagar por el daño que le hacen a los niños. Si no has denunciado a esta persona, deberías de hacerlo. Este es un caso bien serio y sino le pones un stop a esta persona, otro niño puede llegar a ser otra víctima. Gracias por tu honestidad. Deberías de consultar terapia psicológica si la necesitas.

My Worst Experience

I'm going to share with y'all something about my life that happened to me. It's something very ugly. I was violated when I was seven years old. That is the saddest thing to find out when you become an adult. That's why I have a rage that I cannot get out of my mind. The day that something like this happens to a member of family, I swear that I will kill whoever does it. I consider that people who do these kinds of things are pigs. Why don't they look for their women to do this? They are the ones that should die. That's all. Take very good care of your sons and daughters.

-Erivan, Santa Cruz
From The Beat: We deeply regret to hear about what happened to you, friend. Did you have the opportunity to denounce this person that did this to you? These people are very sick in the head and they should pay for their actions for the damage that they cause to children. If you haven't reported this person to the authorities, then another child could become another one of his victims. Thank you for your honesty. You should consider seeking psychological help if you need it.

Para Mi Es Importante Vivir La Vida

Bueno este vato piensa que la vida es importante vivirla. Para unas personas, la vida no es importante vivirla. Esas personas no andan pensando en que la vida es bonita vivirla, porque ellos piensan en otros tipos de ambientes terroristas.

Este bato piensa que la vida es bonita vivirla porque al estar libre uno puede hacer muchas cosas como pasar con su familia, con mi jaina, trabajar honradamente.

Pienso que Dios nos regalo la vida para que la viveramos y la cuidáramos. Esto es todo. Hay los guacho. Un saludo para todos los Catrachos especialmente para todos los de San Pedro Sula.

From The Beat: Claro que la vida es bonita vivirla. Hay muchas cosas que uno puede hacer, siempre y cuando mantengan la vida. Este mundo hay muchas cosas maravillosas esperando por ser descubiertas y experimentadas por ustedes. Ustedes son los que no han aprovechado de lo que la vida ofrece.

For Me It's Important To Live Life

Well, this dude thinks that it's important to live life. For some people, it is not important for them to live life. Those people are not thinking that life is nice to live because they are thinking about other kinds of terrorist atmospheres.

This dude thinks that life is nice to live because by being free, one can do a lot of things like spend time with your family, with your girlfriend, and work an honest job.

I think that God gave us life for us to live it and to take care of it. This is all. I'll see y'all on the outs. A shout-out goes out to all the Honduran people.

-Carlos, Marin
From The Beat: Definitely, life is nice to live. There are always many things one can do when one maintains one's life. In this world, there are many marvelous things waiting to be discovered and experienced by you guys. It is y'all who have not taken advantage of what life has to offer y'all.

Me Van A Mandar Lejos

Cuando me dijeron que me iban a mandar a un programa, les dije que no me importaba donde me mandarían. Cuando me dijeron que me iban a mandar lejos, yo empecé a pensar en donde me mandarían. Me dijeron que me van a mandar a Los Angeles y que tengo que ganas pasas para ir a casa.

From The Beat: ¿Que vas a hacer? ¿Piensas terminar ese programa y ganas pasas? Deberías de hacerlo, seria lo mejor para ti.

They Are Going To Send Me Far Away

When they told me that they were going to send me to a program, I told them that I didn't care about where they sent me. When they told me that they were going to send me far away, I started to think about where they might send me to. They told me that they are going to send me to Los Angeles and I hella want to go back home.

-Jose B1
From The Beat: What are you going to do? Do you plan on finishing that program and with hard work, pass it? You should do it. It would be in your best interest to do so.

Vine Aqui A Los US A Conocer

Soy Mexicano, vine aquí a los Estados Unidos para conocer a este país. Llegue buscando trabajo. Yo andaba en el field trabajando en las fresas y me gusto ese trabajo. El día que yo descansaba iba a jugar basketball, aveces iba a comer en el restaurante con mis hermanos.

From The Beat: Si tenias cosas buenas que te gustaban, que te hizo venir a este lugar? ¿Que fue lo que te metio en problemas? ¿Sea lo que haya sido, aprendistes alguna lección? Si venistes desde lejos, deberías de tomar eso en cuenta.

I Came Here To The U.S. To Get To Know

I'm Mexican and I came to the United States to get to know this country. I came here seeking work. I was out on the fields working on strawberries and I liked that job. On the day that I would rest, I would go play basketball and sometimes I would go eat at a restaurant with my brothers.

-Martin, Santa Cruz
From The Beat: If you had good things that you liked, what made you come to this place? What was it that got you into problems? Regardless of what it was, did you learn a lesson? If you came to this country from far away, you should take that into consideration.

THE PEN DRAGON

Writing to our dear friend and loyal Beat

powerhouse, Krista Kim, this next writer gives us a detailed explanation of his thoughts on True Love: Absolute Commitment. And we must say we judged this piece by its title as many of you will. We have a low tolerance for pieces dealing with romance because more often than not, those pieces don't teach us anything. They're merely the product of the system snatching you away from those you love for a particular amount of time and people finally realizing what good they held. But this piece is totally different as you'll see if you read more than just the title. He breaks 'true love' down to its lowest compound and makes his belief on it easy to understand. That's the mark of an incredible writer. He's writing from the Texas Department of Corrections in Tenn. Col., TX. Hopefully, those of you who are blinded by lust (some of us are even guilty of that) and mix that feeling with love, will find some answers in this piece that may make your life a little easier. Thank you for such a well-thought out piece.

Right now, even if you have no love (commitment) from your family — even if your good time friends and gangsta pals have abandoned you — you still have other people who truly love you — who are committed to you.

True Love: Absolute Commitment

I was writing my friend Krista, who happens to be staff at The Beat, and the topic of "True Love" came up. When I read The Beat, one of the things I see more than any other is how many of the young contributors have reached the place they are because of a lack of true love in this life. I think this is because most people in America don't even know what true love is anymore — I know I didn't used to!

Like so many who find themselves in lock up; I come from a "dysfunctional" family. My mom had been married and divorced three times before my dad. And I had step-siblings from each of those marriages who had already suffered abuse from alcoholic fathers and/or step-fathers. Since my dad was, also, an abusive alcoholic, his marriage to our mom lasted only a few years before she divorced him (then four years later he committed suicide while drunk in a county jail). So while there was always an abundance of fear, anger, and resentment in our home; the love was a lot harder to identify or find.

There were eight children in our family: Bill, Aileen, Jeannette, Loretta, Barbara, Wanda, me, and Ben. Bill joined the military at age 17 to get away. Aileen, Jeannette, Loretta and Barb all married at age 16 (to older men) for their outs (and the latter three all had three failed marriages). I tell you this to illustrate how we saw our "home" as a place to run away from rather than a place to seek safety and comfort and love. A lot of you can relate to that, huh? I don't want to sell my mom short — raising eight children alone, or with little help from drunken abuses, isn't easy today — much harder between 1933 and 1968 when my mom was forced to work 12 to 16 hrs. a day with only a 6th grade education (she was "given" in marriage at the age 13 to an older man—that's how was back then). But long hours at work left little time to supervise children or spend much "quality time" with us.

Some results: Bill died while on probation for molesting his step-son; Aileen lives as a reclusive, schizophrenic — agoraphobic housewife; Jeannette died in 1991 alone on the sofa of her ramshackle house; Loretta changed her name to "Jill Austin" because she didn't want to be who she was; Barb lives a wealthy-but-childless alcoholic; Wanda, in her third marriage, seems to be doing okay; I'm into the 21st year of my second prison stay; and baby brother Ben was just released from his second prison term for DUI.

Growing up in a house where true love is scarce had a serious effect on us, but right now you can avoid making the mistake I did. See, TRUE LOVE is actually commitment to someone. 100% sincere, absolute commitment to a relationship, whether as a friend, a parent, a spouse — whatever. "True Love" is not those warm, fuzzy, can't-think-of-anyone-but-you feelings. Those emotions like adoration, desire, trust, respect — those things can be part of True Love, but even without them, True Love endures. Adoration and desire — even trust and respect — they can all fade or grow stronger with circumstance. True love, is not dependant upon feelings and circumstance — it is a matter of choice; true love is commitment to someone.

My mistake as a teen was I did not recognize this. I was so caught up in my hurt, anger, and resentment about my lousy home and dysfunctional family, that I never realized or recognized the people who truly loved me! My 1st grade teacher, Ms. Keisling, who went out of her way to make

me feel special and encourage my special abilities. Old Mr. Yater who lived down the street my 7th year and who taught me how to "dress out" a goat for barbeque. Bill & Maureen Robinson, the chief Jailer and Matron at the county jail, who tried to be parents to a thirteen year old rebel and give me role models.

These people, and others, were committed to me — they reached out not because their job required it; they went the extra mile because they truly loved and cared about a kid they saw needed help. They were committed to both me and their belief in me. That is what I want you to learn now while you can still have benefit in it. Right now, even if you have no love (commitment) from your family — even if your good time friends and gangsta pals have abandoned you — you still have other people who truly love you — who are committed to you. My friend Krista and the other Beat staff — they truly love you. Their commitment is greater than their job — without true love, the Beat wouldn't even exist!

That especially nice house parent at the group home who always seems to work extra house or have "a moment to spare" for you when you need advice; that neighbor who always let you at their house when you got home to find yourself locked out; true love isn't always all flashing signs and ringing bells — more often than not it is not the steady, not-so-obvious presence in your life like the sunshine on the Earth. It's always there even when it's cloudy, a little of the light still shines through. The important thing is to recognize it where you see it, and allow that love to touch and help you.

At this point, other people might start talking of religion and the love of a "Higher Power" — but I don't like to do that, because not everyone believes the same way — not everyone even worship the same "Higher Power." What I will say is this — there is a real, living, loving spirit that is full of real and eternal love for you. When all others fail us — we can draw strength through that love.

I would like to end this by using each and every one of you who read this to practice true love and never give into the façade and temporary nature of superficial commitment. Never tell someone you love them unless you are prepared to commit to that person 100% forever in whatever kind of relationship it is. If it is in friendship, be 100% loyal 100% of the time. If it is in romance, don't start what you aren't prepared to stay with for the rest of your life.

Our society has abused and degraded love, and perverted its meaning to a point it doesn't mean what it should. This generation — each and every one of you can change that and make true love again into the meaningful commitment to another person that it's supposed to be. You can recognize true love (i.e. commitment) where it's given whether it's from that dedicated teacher, attentive house parent at a group home, caring neighbor, or even the juvenile court judge who keeps believing in you enough to give you chance after chance to be the person he or she believes you are! I allowed "me" and self-pity to blind me to those who truly loved me when I was a teen. I allowed anger, bitterness, resentment, and envy to keep me from seeing the loving, caring people who tried so hard to give me what I didn't have in my family and home. Don't let my mistakes be yours — learn from a Dragon who is "ancient," and benefit from the magic I have gained — true love — because I care about you, too J.

I have only contempt for laughter,
my smile a masquerade.
I act like it all don't faze me
but inside I'm truly afraid.

Mary Jane

Oh my Mary-Jane, how I love thee so,
When I inhale in your sweetness and when in ecstasy
out I blow.
I want to take you to my lips and drown in you I swear,
What a relief to know when times are trivial, you will
always be there.
Once I unwrap you and break you down to your naked
naturalness,
We'll be ready to roll
Or like a vato I could pipe you down my delicious
grapes in a bowl.
Oh my sweet girl, in all flavors you come,
I'm at peace when I'm with you,
You understand where I'm coming from.
But Mary-Jane, you said by your side I would come to
no harm
And I believe you for I was overcome by your charms.
Now look where I'm at, cold and alone
Why have you forsaken me, you promised forever but
now you're gone.
They all said you're a mistake, now I see their words
are true
But Mary-Jane, I still hopelessly love you.

BRITTANY Personifying marijuana as a girl she adores, Brittany, one of our more favorite poets, male or female, hits us with the honest truth this week. For though it's obvious she's not ready to change fully yet, at least she's being honest with us and herself about that. She knows her actions could keep leading her to places she doesn't want to be, but people also don't change over night. In fact, change can be extremely difficult for some of us. We've come to learn that the thought of changing is actually more of a burden than actually changing sometimes. And because of that we'll remain patient with her. As she concludes, 'I'll be content to roll solo another day' we can't help but be inspired by her courage and strength to want to deal with this hard situation alone. We hope she learns as much as she can from this experience and in the meantime we'll keep publishing those lessons being sent to us from Ventura (a Youth Authority institution) in Camarillo, CA.

Roll Solo

I've been alone in this misery, cultivated only by I,
No shoulder wanted to lean on, these eyes refuse to cry.
I don't need your pity or your sympathetic stare
I don't want your b.s. frontin' like you really care
I have only contempt for laughter, my smile a masquerade.
I act like it all don't faze me but inside I'm truly afraid.
Not afraid of people, more like fear of the unknown,
Scared to be forgotten, oh god, I don't wanna die alone.
I realize I bring this upon myself, it's as easy or hard as I
make it
But I'm not really ready to change so why fake it?
I say I know all, but in truth I'm so damn confused
I want to be a winner but I'm already convinced that I'll
lose.
It's so much easier to hate you all, with love comes too
much pain,
I'm afraid if I let myself love and I get hurt once more
I'll never bounce back again.
If I ignore this lonely ache in my soul eventually won't it go
away?
I hope so and pray I'll be content to roll solo another day.

DOPEY Writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA, we bring to you a very gifted first time writer. Introduced to us by his cellie and long time Beat writer, Sherman Manning, Dopey takes us on a journey through his thoughts and beliefs on the recent politics dealing with immigrants. And we must say the way he expresses himself makes it hard to disagree. This exploitive, power-abusing country was built on the blood of immigrants. As a matter of fact, except for Native Americans, we're all immigrants in this country. So, what gives the government the right to tell anyone they can't come over here? Maybe they have the right because they forcefully created the right, which we know isn't true democracy in this magnificently democratic society. But as far as a case that's more specific, Dopey gives us the best example anyone can — him and his family. And as he puts a human face to this ongoing dilemma, we can't help but be aware of his brilliance. Hopefully, politicians will see things the way he does, but in our experience they'll remain asleep, so it's only right that we attempt to wake them up with doses of good writing like this.

An Immigrant Country

On May 30, 2006 I was watching the Montel Williams show on which they were speaking on a number of topics, such as the collection of DNA from those of us and others convicted of a felony, about the rape scandal at Duke University and the one which caught my attention the most, Immigration Reform, now I don't know how a lot of you may feel about this one issue, but for me it means a lot. It means a lot to me because I have family members who were born in Mexico and who came here as an immigrant over 25 years ago and is now a citizen of this country.

Now I ask myself, what if my parents weren't citizens and I was still a child and born in this county? Would they send my parents back to their countries of birth and leave me here? Would they deport me, a citizen of this country by birth? Or would they let us stay here for my sake? Fortunately I don't have to worry about these things. I'm now a grown man, both my parents are citizens and are safe from these so-called reforms. Unfortunately for millions of other families there is a lot to fear and worry about, will they be forced to leave their children behind? Or will they have to take their American born back to countries where

just about every aspect of life is inferior?

Here is what I see. I see children who were once getting a somewhat decent education, now being forced to work alongside their parents so that they can make enough to eat, clothe, and shelter themselves. No more after school programs, no time to play with video games or with friends, no more baseball bats swinging at balls. Now they'll wield a hoe so they can do the back-breaking work of tilling the land so as to sustain themselves. But it doesn't have to be like this but it is and it's coming at us in a big way.

On the show Montel said that he's sick and tired of brown skinned people being the ones always mentioned when this topic comes up in the media. That this thing is not just about Mexicans and anybody else south of the border. And I agree with him 110% on this. This is going to affect so many other nationalities, not just Mexicans, Salvadorians, etc. These politicians fail to see that without us (and by us I mean immigrants) a lot of things will tremendously slow down or completely shut down. You just can't send eleven million plus people back to their countries of origin and even if they do pass legislation on this, it will just be a big waste of money and resources. You have politicians saying that we'll be giving immigrants amnesty, while others say that's not the case.

Personally I feel all people already here should be allowed to stay. Yeah, sure there are many undocumented people in jails and prisons all across the country but I think it's safe to say that it's a small percentage who commit crimes, the rest are here working hard or trying to find jobs to support families here and abroad. So we have to stop characterizing all immigrants as criminals. They're no different than families born and raised here in the U.S. They too have family values and morals, only difference is that we speak Spanish, Chinese, Russian, German, Hebrew, etc. So all I ask is that you support Immigrant Rights and remember that this county was, is and will always be an immigrant country, so get used to it.

CARLOS AMAYA A Call To America's Youth' is a great piece with a voice sounding desperate to change the current situation of our 'great' country. Carlos Amaya, a well-respected writer here at The Beat, gives it to us raw and uncut. He intelligently points out many ways in which our system is set-up to make those that grew up in poverty fail. And even though there are cases where people grew up in poverty and made something of themselves, we know that those cases are rare and extremely difficult to pull off. So what our dear friend suggests is that we wake up, smell the coffee, and do something about it. Hey, we don't think that's such a bad attitude. In fact, we feel the same way. We're sad leaving workshops each week because each week we see the same ol' faces suffering from the same ol' problems our country has placed on us. He writes from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA.

A Call To America's Youth

In the past two decades so many punitive laws have come to pass to fight "The war on drugs" and now "The war on youth." I ask myself... How many more laws will me made and on what or who will the next war be declared? The government of this country is fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan and is helping to fight wars in South America and other places. In the world all under the name of "the war on terror" to me just another war! Why does this government (Vietnam, Central America, South America, and now the Middle East) when it has it's own problems here on it's own soil. Is it a wonder why a country that at one time was so loved and respected is now hated and divided among itself? In these days this country I divided on the wars it's fighting, immigration and even on in what language to sing it's national anthem! These wars are supposed to spread democracy but yet if democracy doesn't go their way like it did with "Hamas" in Palestine then it's to stop terrorism. So is this country trying to help or being what some might call a warmonger? I feel it's the latter.

I am 26 years old, for over 16 years I've been in and out of the system but for the past 9 years I've been in the California Prison System. I am not a boy scout I'll admit that but these past few years I've had nothing but time to sit down and really think about how I've lived my life up to this point. Not just myself but also those with me in here in the system. Those of us who now and probably from now on will call this house, (live life in here) I also think about the youngsters "the youth" who thanks to these fresh new laws will probably soon join the ranks in here. Iraq, Darfur, Columbia, many other countries have their "invisible children." This country does to!

There are those who will say I, and many of us, deserve to be in here. Some of us probably do but what about this "war on youth" who instead of helping is just trying to pack more of "us" in here. It's like we're being "set up" to be in here. The book "Lockdown America" talks about police and prisons in this age of crisis. A build up in prisons has been going on and who's better to fill them up with? The young of America who can and does give the prison system and state cheap labor via P.I.A. and parolees working "any job" they can get. This capitalistic government needs and creates poverty and a surplus population to live in it. From in it gets it's cheap labor but in order to keep this population in control "in

order to manage it" it creates laws to punish and keep balanced. We don't see what you'll see in every corner of the inner streets of (Los Angeles, Compton, Watts) in Beverly Hills and Rentwood etc... those young can do the same crimes we do but not go to camp, CYA or prison like us. No! They get slapped on the wrist because they don't come from poverty they will not become the future criminals they say we will become because of where we come from! So to me it seems this "war on youth" should have its name changed to "war on youth of poverty." The future is supposed to be for the young. Does that include us and ours? Or is the future of our young to be in prison for life or long periods of time?

They say we're sent to prison to get punishment and rehabilitation we need! I guess to them rehabilitation is to throw us in our cells for months at a time with no store, visits, access to the library to fight our cases, get books or study for our G.E.D. to give them cheap labor working for a few cents an hour. They say we act like animals fighting and stabbing each other assaulting the cops but when we caged like animals having nothing to do but stress, watch endless hours of TV lose hope and build up our anger and hate with the "Eff you mentality." How do they expect us to act when let out of our cages? Isn't that a sort of "set up?" it seems like "For now" they are winning their little war. But I've read that generation Y (us) is seventy million strong! We're losing right now isn't it time for change?...

My fellow comrades! It's time we do something. Start to fight back "our" friends at The Beat Within are giving us the chance (not just them but many like them) they unite us, bring us together, give up hope many lose everyday. Many of you know what I am talking about. Every week we all send in writings and poems. We share our views, our thoughts and feelings about and how we live, grew up and what we see everyday. Great writers like Wardog, Dat Nguyen, Rhonda Jones, and many others come together to share.

Some of us like myself are now in here for life. Many I feel will soon join us. But some of you will hit them streets again. You will get out. I read how some of you want to do good and be with those you love and care about. If so, if it's really true then I ask that something be done. "Recently a day without an immigrant" brought the youth together to protest something. Laws like prop 21, 187, 3 strikes etc... have opened our political eyes. They say this country is for the people. Let's show them that those of us who come out of poverty, those of us who are immigrants are also part of the people! We also have a say-so "especially the youth" 'cause like they like to say the future is theirs. We fight ourselves, we kill ourselves. For this or that reason. There is a war that has been declared. Isn't it the time we take notice and fight back! We're millions strong! United we become a very loud voice. Reform, changes need to happen, especially in our current society.

I'm not telling you that you should stop your gangbanging. No! Stay true to who "truly" are your friends. But think about the road you want to take in this life. Gangbanging takes you so far we all know this. Just open your mind and eyes to what's going on in front of you in your communities. Remember where you come from remember where your parents come from and try your best to get to and do what you want to do in this life. They declared war. It's time to fight back in our new found way.

PLAZ When we opened the letter to this next piece, we were amused by what we had seen. We're not talking about the piece, though it's a good one, it's not one that's intended to amuse us we assume. What we were amused by was this piece was written on the back of a commissary receipt. How clever is that? How dedicated is this writer? Well, in his poem, he tackles the monster that's plagued many of us for a long time — drugs. And we're glad he did because usually drugs are the stepping stone to mountains of other problems. He's writing from the Salem County Correctional Facility in Woodstown, NJ. And if we can send him some paper we will, so let us know. We're sure you can fit more words on a paper that's made for writing.

My Battle With Drugs

The great role that drugs played
And how they thieved my soul.
Just look at a junkie's body
And you can see the toll.
Having my mom read the obituary
Is so damn scary
This demon for years I've
Tried to bury
Everyday we're playing Russian Roulette

Because jail or death will
Come in a hurry, wanna bet
So why is it so hard to kick
The coke, crack, and smack
When all we're doing is putting
A knife in our own back
I missed out on so many good years
Because I chose to run the
Meanest streets with no fears
Now they got me locked down forced
To stare at bricks all day
To force me to realize what I threw away
I've been living with this monster
Which I've lost control
Now look at me again playing
The jailhouse role
I've been praying that the final fight
For success will feel so great
But god damn I've been around drugs
Even younger than 8
So God please help me before it's too late.

Let us eliminate anxiety, And pray for better times

Times . . .

A world full of war;
Let us question who's at fault,
From the streets of a nation,
Across the map to the gulf.
Times are uncertain;
Just take a look around,
There's one man who's up,
Yet the other one is down.
We dream of a society;
When the madness is behind
Let us eliminate anxiety,
And pray for better times.
Lord, if you hear me;
I'm down here on my knees,
Will you stop all the madness,
I hope you hear my plea.
Let us start with forgiveness;
As we trust the human mind,
Let us trust in forgiveness,
As we grow along with times.

SMOKEY So many people out there have talent. It's a shame that we lock most of it up and keep the 'real' criminals out here. The ones who make themselves believe they're giving back to the community when in all actuality, they're exploiting everything under the sun. But hey, let's look at the bright side. And that's people like this next first time writer for The Beat. He hits us with a platinum rap called, "Clinging To Life" and like so many others he finds his release through writing. He captures a great idea in his hook (chorus). "It's a bigger picture just hold on/Never submit to the oppressor, stay firm and strong/If you cry for me, let it be tears of joy/Know your boy holding on, trying to make hella noise." Life is so hard sometimes that we find ourselves having to cling to it in order to stay sane. It's a shame that we are only expected to hold on, what about helping us strive? Forget holding on, we want to live fully. We appreciate his words and hope when he gets this, he'll write to us again, for he truly is a great MC. He's writing from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA.

Clinging To Life

(Verse 1)

In the flicks that you send, I seen the joy in your eyes
Deep down in my eyes, I don't want to see you cry
We all been through poverty the grieve and the stress
It's damn near time, that we all get bless
And find the position that we play in this life that we live
I must strive with my talent, that's my gift, you dig
God forbid that I let it all go to waste
Got breadwinners, that will take the best first place
I'm having dreams of my CD being number one on top
It's a trip when I wake up I'm surrounded by cement blocks
And the time keeps on ticking and I'm doing no winning
Disaster keep on happening and the world keep on spinning
I'm determine and I'm focus, that it's going to get better
In the game on the rise, paper chase for the cheddar
By all means gotta keep my stacks coming in bundles
That's a major thing that will keep your boy kind of humble
Where I stand — is it illusion and can I make it come true
If it's left to the board, then Smoky life is through
Then my family didn't get a chance, to meet the new improve
'Cause I've been stuck in this rib-cage, doing what I do.

(Hook)

It's a bigger picture just hold on
Never submit to the oppressor, stay firm and strong
If you cry for me, let it be tears of joy
Know your boy holding on, trying to make hella noise

(Verse 2)

Can I sale some projects, just to accomplish my goals
I'm at the bottom of the pit, trying to climb this steep road
With this darkness trying to hide me, but I'm like a star in the sky

PAUL JONES SR. We received these two outstanding poems with a letter about six months ago. We're trying to catch up with all these great BWO writers, but sometimes our work will cause us to let things slip through the cracks. We're glad we found this once again because as you'll see, this man has a very deep mind. Mainly speaking of the 'times' and how drastic they are, Paul Jones is only speaking reality. He was writing from the county jail in San Diego, CA, at the time he sent this. But with our system, who knows where he is now. We guess we'll just send this issue to him and see if it gets bounced back. If you happen to read this somewhere else, Paul, please don't hesitate and fill us in on the latest.

It's A Time...

Time after time,
We dig deep within our minds,
You either grow, or let go,
Depend on what you find.
We are here for a reason,
Let us make no mistake,
Because many failed mentally,
In this life of give or take.
Oh the process is real,
It's a true living hell,
It's a time for one to grow,
And a time not to fail.
Let us analyze the position,
Take a look back in time,
Let's drop all the weapons,
Let the weapon be our mind.
Oh yeah, he know I did it,
So before I let you go,
He has embraced my forgiveness,
I thought I'd let you know.

The talent is in the pen and they haven't even realize
Being condemn we get the cold shoulder and the deaf ears
So I'm going to point this picture clear, so everybody can hear

They plot for me to sit in here, until I croak
Or wait on a miracle, that will never be spoke
I'm black and broke, but yet I'm determine to rise
Already against all odds, so I must plan wise
With al this time on my side, I must put it to use
Put myself in the pen and let it do what it do
When my brains feel like that it just had enough
I'm going to change gears 'cause it's time for it to toughen up
Hush up all the ones that never had faith
I might bless you , and let you eat off my plate
With your criticism, only made me work a little harder
You can never break my faith, that belong to our father
Just taught me a little patience, now I think business wise
Like pushing one of my ideas, to orchestrate a clothing line

(Hook)

It's a bigger picture just hold on
Never submit to the oppressor, stay firm and strong
If you cry for me, let it be tears of joy
Know your boy holding on, trying to make hella noise

(Verse 3)

I'm exhausting myself, but I must not stop
One day this isolated thinker, going to be on top
Then my life of tribulation, counted up to something
Remember people use to say, I'll never amount to nothing
It just took a little longer, to organize my priorities
Now I'm way advance and pushing my ideas with authority
Almost out of the abyss, a soldier that you can't miss
So get a bar of this, while I drop this hit
It's a story of life, that I live that I tell
From inside a prison cell, better known as hell
But I'm still clutching to faith, thinking about that date
Use to always debase, of me stepping out of them gates
Go stay cock back and loaded, from many years in the lab
When I explode through the sound proof, they go say that boy bad
Once the gag was out my mouth, you heard the words of platinum
From the saying that I speak, many people is tatt-num
I rip through the beats like bullets tear throw the flesh
Even blow up studio systems cause I don't need no rest
Been possess with this gift to spit to reach out
Now the crowd been bless and that's without a doubt

(Hook)

It's a bigger picture just hold on
Never submit to the oppressor, stay firm and strong
If you cry for me, let it be tears of joy
Know your boy holding on, trying to make hella noise

RHONDA JONES

RHONDA JONES

A few Beat issues have passed and we haven't featured our most prolific inspirational writer in a while. What were we thinking? If you believe in Jesus and have been reading The Beat for more than a couple months, then the name Rhonda Jones AKA Spiritual Gangsta, is all too familiar. Writing from the Connecticut Correctional Facility in Niantic, Connecticut, she blesses us with a slew of poems as is true to Rhonda form. Wait... this just in... Rhonda has gotten out of jail as of April and is free on her spiritual quest. We'd love to meet you Rhonda. Maybe there'll be a day that you find yourself in San Francisco and you can come by our office and visit. For though she thanks us several times, it's us that should be thanking her, for she's dropped heat on us time and time again. And this latest time is no different. From life after jail to keeping her cool during room searches, this woman's heart bleeds for the rest of us and we have more than appreciated it. Thank you for all that you are and all you've done and hopefully you'll continue to keep us in your prayers because we're definitely going to be thinking about you. Keep us updated if your life permits.

The Gift Of Writing

I write about things that
Are fiction and nonfiction
Because when it comes to writing
I have an addiction
To me poetry
Is truly an art
And a real poet's poems
Comes from the heart
This is how
Their poems are designed
The feel it in their hearts
Then they picture it in their minds
And once they see
Their poems in print
Their whole demeanor
Becomes content
To them this
Is very exciting
But most poetresses
Just love writing
To write poetry
You must be suave and swift
Because everybody knows
Poetry is a gift
Poetry must have
A lyrical chemistry
For it to be deemed truly
As poetry

Spiritual Gangsta Free At Last

What's up Beat Within Readers, this is Rhonda Jones. Infamously known for my spiritual poems.

I've now been out of jail since April 7, '06. Praise the God I left my homework of Bridgeport, Connecticut and got my production transferred to Charlotte, North Carolina.

I attended church séances at the Light of the World Ministries and I go to Bible study on Wednesday nights
I'm working now as a cashier at K.F.C.

I am still the head liaison for my ministry, in which I started in Niantic called Prayer Partner Pen Pals. I write several males and females to inspire them to be transformed by the renewing of the mind.

I am living testimony that change is possible. In Christ Jesus. We become new.

I'm confident that I can do all things through Christ Jesus which strengthens me. Amen.

I thank God every day because I know if I hadn't surrendered, I'd still be the person I was, but instead today I've been redeemed.

So my message is that “Draw near to God and God will draw near to you.”

Read the new testament and observe what Christ says and how he acts. Make His word your rule and His conduct your example. May the Lord add a blessing to the reading of His word

For Prayer Partner Pen Pals, write to Rhonda Jones 5905 Farm Pond Lane #201 Charlotte, North Carolina 28212. God Bless

A Thank You To The Beat

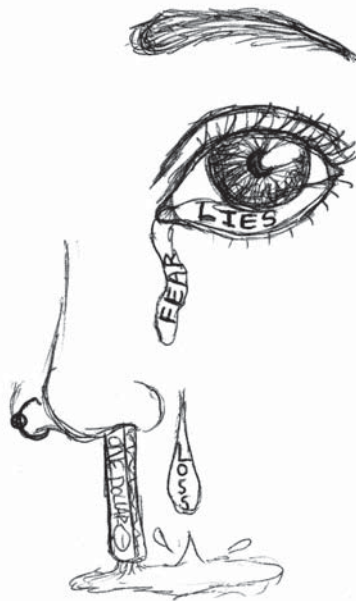
The Beat Within had been a huge inspiration to me while I was incarcerated and even now that I am out.

I used to write poems just for the fun of it and then I realized that I could really convey myself poetically.

Most things that I wrote about are from things that I experienced and by me starting to put my thoughts on paper, really helped me to get in touch with how I think and the reason I do certain things. I started looking at my life from all perspectives, inventory myself inventorying my thoughts.

I've turned my life over to Christ and it's because of Him that I discharged this time. I didn't go back to drugs, the things that I used to do.

I've learned to believe that I can change. So with much gratitude I thank The Beat.



Mistake With Fakes

You were initiated
 Under false pretenses
 And now being in jail
 Had brought you to your senses
 Because no you're able
 To see a clear view
 And the vow they made
 None of them were true
 What kind of
 Membership is this?
 Now that you need them
 They don't exist

Those people, turned out to be a foe
And its those people, that you don't need to know
Joining a gang, was your biggest mistake
Because gang members aren't nothing but fakes
And this is where the b.s. ends
Because don't nobody need, no fake ass friends
Now by your name, has a number
From hanging with dumb, and being dumber
Now they aren't even giving you thought
Although they were down, only you got caught
You did the time and you remained truer
But now you know, gang members are losers
To them you have earned stripes
But the question is, is this how
You want to spend your life?
With teardrop tattoos under your eye
For taking someone's life and not even knowing wh

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is
Important because
When we don't forgive
We hold on to what was
The hurt, the pain,
The misery will last
If we hold on to it
Within our grasp
The memory of it
Will fade away
When we stop reliving it
Every day and pray
Because forgiveness comes
From heaven above
In God's unconditional
Agape love
That's why forgiving others
Is a must
Because then we know
That God forgives us

Life After Jail

Your release date
Is the day you be waiting for:
And you don't want to return
To the way you were way before...
So don't let those dreams
That were running through your head
Vanish at the gate
And return to a life of dread...
Because it's in you
To make a difference...
All you have to do is stay determined
So you don't go back to jail
And live like a vermin.
Because only you can
Put a end to the madness
And live a life full
Of joy and gladness...
So make preparations
In advance
So that you will have
A better chance
And walk in faith
And no in doubt
And prove to yourself
What you are about
Because if you go back
To living the same
It's yourself
That you must blame...
A better life
Does exist
When you say to yourself
I really can and will do this.
Because there is life
After jail
For all those who are
Determined to prevail.

Still Intact

My cell got shook down
And I felt sort of depressed
Many items were missing
And my mind couldn't rest
After being angry
For a while
I realized that the incident
Had stole my smile
I thought about ways
That I could get even
But I also kept in mind
I will soon be leaving
There was a time when
I used to make matters worse
But now I have learned
To think them out first
So whatever they took
Out of my cell
I won't perish with them
In their hell
The Bible says in (Isaiah) 54:17
No weapons that form against
The shall prosper
Because if I let myself
Give root to the devil
I'll be on
Their same level
Now my smile is back
And also my Christianity is still intact
Thanks to God that I didn't react

When we don't forgive
We hold on to what was
The hurt, the pain,
The misery will last

Seeking, Asking, And Finding

Let me tell you about three of my first poems. 1. Forgiveness. 2. Searching. 3. The Christian Prison Anthem.
When I was "Searching" I became desperate. Through "forgiveness" I became hopeful and in "The Christian Prison Anthem" I became free at last.
Since then I've been living in the supernatural, on a spiritual journey.
I "seek" in searching, I "asked" in forgiveness and I became "found" in the Christian Prison Anthem.
Read the New Testament and observe what Christ says and how He acts. Make His Word your rule and His conduct your example.
May the Lord add a blessing to the reading of His Word.
Message Delivered: The Bible says, Matt 7: 7-8
Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth and him that knocketh it shall be opened.

To make a difference . . .

All you have to do is stay determined
So you don't go back to jail
And live like a vermin.

RHONDA JONES (CONT.)

You're Appreciated

I can't thank The Beat Within enough for publishing my poetry and sharing my views in which I deem to be worthwhile.

I remember when I used to try and tell everything that I could, but now I'm trying to give back, and after all these wasted years, I did get something out of being incarcerated.

I stayed on educating my mind by the use of reading books, and then when I got saved I started nourishing my mind by daily reading my Bible, and devouring spiritual books.

The Beat Within has influenced my poetry and proved, the pen is mightier than the sword.

What I write may seem like just words, but what I say has had a powerful impact, I discovered this when Nasir Davis acknowledged me.

It's a joy when I read The Beat Within in whole and now I see that I am part of something that's bigger than just my poems, I am part of the Beat Within family?!! And the Beat has shown me that what I say matters.

The Beat Within is appreciated but I also feel appreciated, in a very loving and encouraging way.

Knowledge is powerful, and when that knowledge is in the right hands there's no stopping what knowledge can do.

I'm satisfied if I can poetically influence one youth or person at a time, it's in their learning from the mistakes that I've made, that makes it all worthwhile.

I'm a old g who has served life on the installment plan. I used to think that shoplifting had a worthy cause, because I always had designer gear, but now I've come to know, ain't no crime worth my time. So my boosting days are now over finally.

I've been battling with a crack addiction for years to learn that I can't do it on my own, but with God, all things are possible, praise the Lord.

I've been discharging out of jail and programs for years to learn

that I can't do it on my own, but with God, all things are possible.

Yes the strength that I have now has all come from my Lord and Redeemer, because praise the Lord, the Bible says, I can do all things through Christ Jesus in which strengthens me. (Phil 4:13) Because the Bible also says, my God shall supply all my needs. Amen.

The Bible says, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds. To change the way you think. For I know the plans that I have for you declares the Lord. Plans to help you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Before I got saved, I didn't know God intimately, but by daily reading my Bible, the more I studied the Word of God the more God began to study me. And the less of me and the more Jesus that He sees, the more pleased He is.

One of my quotes are, if you stand for nothing, you will fall for anything. I know this first hand because there was a time I stood for the glory of shoplifting in which isn't anything to be proud of but yet I was.

But praise the Lord, when God began to work out my inventory. Sorting out what I needed to live a righteous life, and what I didn't need.

This is when a subtle change begun. I started questioning my thoughts and the motives behind them.

I started disliking who I used to be that's why I themed my conversion as "Coming out of darkness", because that's exactly where I came from, and that's exactly also where I refuse to return. What has really kept me saved for over a year now is that I don't want to go back to living the way I use to live, and in order to stop, I had to change. The Bible has given me a whole new outlook on life.

For sure God has told me "Rhonda you have a mind, so use it." So now I'm putting my thoughts that I deem of good report in print, there's to The Beat Within and The Beat readers whom I've grown to love and feel appreciated.

I also encourage others to share their views, because for sure they are welcome received.

Well I'm signing out now, and also, thanks for listening. Being appreciated does wonders... thanks for the influence.

ALEXANDER Here at The Beat we hear so many sad stories. Sometimes we have to take breaks to the bathroom or walk around the block to keep people from seeing us cry. So it's always nice to hear from someone who's ready to break out of old behaviors and ways of living. This next writer, who's writing from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA, seems more than ready to live a positive life. In his piece, "Where My Mind Is At Today," he explains what's going through his head when on his way to prison. And it seems like he came to some really good conclusions, "I've thought of my life day and night since I hit prison and I came to a sincere conclusion to stop the craziness and live a decent life." If only more people would come to this conclusion, then maybe we could put the whole prison industry out of business. But who wants to do that when you can be down for your homies, do time, maybe catch a bullet or two? We really enjoyed this piece. It took us away from the norm. Thank you, we look forward to hearing updates about how this is going. FYI, Alexander was once a primetime writer in our max unit three class over in Alameda County Juvenile Hall.

Where My Mind Is At Today

First off, I extend my respect all of The Beat staff members. I'm truthfully thankful for your response and Beat which you sent me, thank you for your time, and here's a topic I made up a couple seconds ago. I thought maybe you'd appreciate it and put it in The Beat. Thanks again.

Just a couple of weeks ago I was in county jail from there I was transferred to San Quentin State Prison. During the bus ride to prison, my mind was spinning with all kinds of questions, which I did not have an answer to. Now here I am in my cell, clearer of my thoughts, but now the true question is where is my mind at today.

I entered prison August 7th of 2005. A couple of questions popped into my mind, such as 1. What will I do with myself now that I'm in prison? 2. Will I pick up more time? 3. Do I really wanna keep on living this crazy life? You see I wasn't ready for this kind of situation, never thought I'd end up here, but yet here I am, answering all of the questions I had in my mind.

I've thought of my life day and night since I hit prison and I came to a sincere conclusion to stop the craziness and live a decent life. This is not the right place to start, but it's just a step to my brand new life! I'm not going to sit here, and say it was easy to stop living the life which in

my mind thought was the best I've succeeded in achieving 1 good step in my life. I know I have a long road ahead of me but if one has the mentality to change, it will and can be done.

During my past years, I wasn't really concerned with what I was doing or where my mind was at, but I came to a point where I said to myself, "If I don't stop now, I can end up in a worser situation!" I'm doing a 6 year term, been down about 10 months, I wasn't even out for 8 days before I got locked up again, which I know was all in me to do what I did. I don't judge myself, for what I've done, but what I now comprehend is the fact to try and "correct" my past mistakes. People would say because I'm in prison, I find myself in a worse situation, in a way they are right, but there are things that are a lot worser than to be in a cell!

I wake up every morning, thinking in a positive way, against the place, but if you carry yourself, strong and positive, things will work out. I'm a simple youngster with a new way of thinking and watching things. I may not know the future but what I do know is what I want for myself, and the way if I choose to live my life and as simple as I write it down. I know it can be done. I will succeed and follow my heart, 'cause deep down I know it is the correct, easy way to live your life. I care about myself now that I've visualized this way of living, and the reason I say that is because I didn't really care about myself in the past. Why, many reasons why. I have been out there doing wrong, smoking, and gang banging, etc, just 'cause I'm locked away doesn't mean I shouldn't care about myself. Now is the best time to check yourself and see who you really are. I appreciate myself for what I'm doing with myself. I could've easily took a different route but the only person who I was hurting was me. I'm through with associating with negativity, it may be around all the time, just gotta turn away and pretend it wasn't there. It may be difficult, but if you can do time for a crime you can change for your life and benefit.

Today I'm happy and peaceful, just telling myself who I really am, and concentrating on getting something out of all of this. I eat good, sleep good, now it's the beginning of living good. And this is how my mind is today at this precise moment. Thank you.

Truth Is Purity

Everyday we see the world
In our personal point of view
Building our tower of babble
To find understanding in the answers
To climb in knowledge
Towards the side of God
Ever higher to the heavens
Whether for wisdom or power
Relies on the spirit of man
Does he seek light and truth?
Or the corrupt kings seat?
Only your heart can feed the will
If the will becomes strong
Where Sin has no snare
The God will see his soul
And grant the gifts of life
Can lead the way for the flock
Love is pure in all it's glory
Truth is the essence of what's pure.

Con-Flicted, Chapter 5 "Small Time Rebel"

It's at moments like this that I like to reflect upon my life as an image on water and see how I've grown. But to my frustration there we're too many ripples distorting what I was looking at. Too many things that I saw wrong with myself to actually see myself for what I was. People it seemed liked to throw stones in the water and that was messed up because I needed to see me was messed up because I needed to see me not everyone else. Back in the past, I do recall at times, at time I never really had time to learn anything that would help me with my social skills or how to take care of problems once they arise. So I have to wing it most of the time.

I knew I'd have to learn sometime so I might as well start here at my new residence. I figured once again I could come out on top if I just observed and watched what was going on. I didn't know at the time what my objective of the whole experience was to be but I did know that I wanted friends. So I watched.

The bad thing though about watching is that you have to be quiet in order to observe. But some people look at your observation as a sign of weakness and the observer becomes the prey of humility in all its Glory's. That was me again. And again the frustration and anger, my long lived demons, would entice me into blindness.

My blindness would be impression. Sometimes, I have observed that if you give an air of dominance either through physical valor or semantic trickery the other people around you, not all but most, will hit their own bluffs end. That's what I would do.

I would bluff my way into a level of dominance. Blindly, but with confidence.

Throughout my stay in this group home I would learn about staying in shape and bluffing like a pro poker player but the one thing I would treasure because of my homeless nature was how to steal something right in front of someone face.

My teacher was a 6 feet tall Tahoe kid by the name of Zach. He was a mouthy, energetic, egotistical clown, but I could relate to him.

Anyhoo, school had just started and we were shopping for clothes and back packs etc, etc. When we got everything we needed and piled into the van Zach whispered to me that he got something for me when we got back to the house. Turned out he's been snatching packs of smokes for months right in front of every body. That was the key. So in the open things can disappear. I got it down to a science before I started to abuse this gift. I never got busted though.

But before meeting Zach I met everyone else in the house. And there was one group of kids I knew would be trouble. One of them was Zach's brother and his friend...Well he was a black kid who thought he was the next Jerry Rice. I tried to avoid them but living in a small house you tend to run into them more often.

Then there was my roommate. I forgot his name as well but I'll never forget him. He was a little slow in the head on the verge of mental retardness. I felt sorry for him because I couldn't figure out why he was in a group home. He just didn't fit the profile of a troubled kid. Then there were the staff. What a mixed up, confused bunch of oaks I've ever seen. One minute they're your friend and the next your worst enemy. It was a circus of idiots and I was the man in the ringside seats weary of the lions and relieved at the tamers.

I liked the group home at first but after awhile the world called to me again. I missed the cities, the multitudes of curious people, the drugs and liquor, the boot parties, and road trips, train hopping from town to town and the freedom of enjoying the world as it was meant for. So of my own volition I ran with my only semi friend Zach and his girlfriend. Everyday after school our bus would pull into the parking to pick us up and if we weren't on the bus when it left you're then considered a run away. We stayed at the school for a good two hours to sleep for the night. Man was she living ruff.

Anyways, the next morning we set out to find our way to Reno, Nevada. We figured we could thumb our way there or walk the whole

JEREMY TOWNER

Finally! We've been waiting for this chapter all month. And of course he doesn't let us down. In this Chapter of Jeremy Towner's book titled, 'Con-Flicted', he talks about his stay at a group home and how him, his friend, and his friend's girlfriend take a journey looking for a better way of living. We've been compelled by each chapter of this book and at the end of this chapter we're glad to read that he's left room for another chapter. Keep them coming Jeremy, we're really waiting to read the rest. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, and we're glad he decided to write a book because he's truly a gifted author. As most of you know, we first met Jeremy when he was fighting for his life over in Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall.

way. But first we needed some cash and food so me and Zach went to the local gas station and Zach's girl went to bum some cash off of a nun.

So we had out plan set to go and me and Zach were going to steal as much food as we could but upon entering the store our plan came apart in a whirlwind. Our pictures were already posted everywhere and the store clerk recognized us immediately. My panic was in full bloom and my legs in full motion. I was running so fast out of the store I forgot to take Zach with me. I just felt this instinct to run, hide, get away from the problem as fast as my legs would let me. And being true to myself and using my street smarts I headed for the nearest park, which by coincidence had the town's baseball stadium, and I hid in the thickest set of bushes I could find. About two minutes go by and I see Zach running right by me so I yell for him. As soon as he hears me he stops and jumps right in the bushes next to me. A good thing too because the town's police force, one cop car, strolled by just as we were being still.

With our hearts using our ribs like a piano it was no wonder we didn't come out until night fall. But we passed the time by eating a whole bunch of food that Zach snatched before he took off. Even fear knows no laws.

An hour past nightfall went by and the town started to die down with fewer cars on the street and nobody walking around. We decided to make our move to a rendezvous point that we all agreed upon if something went wrong. So back to the school we went.

While we walked back to the school I thought a lot of what would happen should we get caught. Well I just would not let that happen. I put a high price on what I called freedom and they will never take it away.

I also wondered why I just couldn't be left alone. Why must I be hunted like an animal by a bunch of power hungry authority figures who try and succeed in making you feel like a peasant.

We met up with Zach's girl at the school and as we did she told us she got two hundred and fifty bucks from the nun. So we were set if we could make it to Reno, Nevada.

So then we took back streets and alleyways until we thought we were on the highway to Nevada. Knowing we had to stay out of every one's sight we only went at night. Which can, by the way, have it's set backs.

Turns out that the town's sewage plant was across the street from some restaurants. They were dumping their waste in a field that we needed to walk through. It was like a marsh with its tiny islands of solid ground so me and Zach didn't step in mush. However, Zach's girl fell in a pool of it. I laughed my ass off. I don't know why. It just seemed like other people's misfortune was hilarious.

We kept walking on though determined in our efforts to escape the law and it's confining confictions. We made it to a highway, which I recognized as the wrong one. But Zach wanted to try it anyways. The damn fool. But I couldn't just leave him, his girl had the cash. So we walked, and walked and walked and in the distance the town's local prisons lights were getting brighter and brighter. Finally I got so paranoid I yelled to Zach that we were on the wrong highway. We argued for a long time and then out of the blue Zach says he wants to go back to the group home. He said he was tired and cold.

Well boo-hoo. We already went literally through all that crap and he wants to go back?

I said fine and was even more surprised when Zach's girl said she wanted to keep going. She must have not really wanted to go back at all.

We walked on and tried to find a turn off road that would take us to the right highway when we happened upon a little convenience store. I figured we could ask for directions we were both given some bad news. The highway we needed to be on was more than 20 miles away. Damn that Zach.

Then the girl starts to get discouraged and wants to go back home. Then she starts to bring me down and I give in.

I was cold, lost, had no money and didn't give a damn anymore. It was over.

The girl called her mom who came to pick her up and drive me back to the group home. My small time rebellion was short lived.

When I was at the group home they took my shoes and all of my stuff so I couldn't run again. Then the cops came and drove me all the way back to Santa Rosa to juvenile hall.

A crushed attempt to try to straighten out my life. So it was back to the drawing board and my old ways again. But this time I would be a little wiser.

SINCERE We're getting a lot of references from Qadafi The Five Percenter and we sure do appreciate it because he's referring some really good people. This next writer hits us with a little letter about himself and some words of wisdom for the younger generation. He starts off by giving us some history on him and we must say that though he was raised way across the country, the struggles he's endured are a mirror image of some of the things that go on out here. Raising five children by the age of seventeen is a daunting task, one that requires a mature and thoughtful mind. We can't help but feel for all those children he's had because now they're left without a father. Hopefully, they go to visit him and send letters to him — very sad. We want to hear more from this writer, so please don't hesitate to drop us a line or two.

The Beat Within

Peace to the entire staff, contributors, volunteers, and associates of Beat Within. "Peace" is a universal greeting coming out of love because without love there would never be peace.

How can one receive Beat Within? One would love to receive it on a regular basis! Unfortunately one is impecunious — so one can't purchase it. If you could be of assistance in providing one with a subscription, it would be highly appreciated.

First and foremost, one was introduced to your work just recently by Qadafi The Five Percenter — as you know him. As one would like to share my ideas with you.

One's born name is Lorenzo, but one's righteous name is Sincere. One was born and raised in the streets of Beantown, Boston-Roxbury; Academy Home Projects, New Edition (Ronnie, Bobby, Ricky, Mike, and Ralph), Free (106 & park), Raymond "Benzino" Scott, Marvin "Marvelous" Hagler, as well as Malcolm X (God bless the dead) are honorable mentions from one's neighborhood with exception to Malcolm X who hustled, lived in my neighborhood before catching his case; in which ultimately sent him to the pen in Massachusetts. Just a lil' history of the neighborhood.

My mother was murdered in '83 when I was just 6 years old! So one spent most of his time with his maternal aunts and uncles who took on the cumbersome task of raising me. In reality, one was raised by the streets. My father was in and out of my life due to his illicit activity. He was a pimp/stick-up kid! He was forced to make a decision when he got in trouble with the law, which was either prison or the military. Back in the days judges sentenced criminals this way in which one had an option of going to the military. My father chose military — the navy. So it was rare that I saw him 'cause of this.

Fast forward, this year is 1988. I'm 11 years old. My older brother used to take me up and down the east coast and Midwest, grindin' as we call it! My brother didn't believe

in sellin' dope to people of color nor victimizing people of color. So, he inculcated this mentality in me and it stuck with me. We used to rob dope spots for everything and sell the dope back to the people in our neighborhood for dirt cheap. You see, the Irish and Italians control (and continue to do so to this day) the city of Boston. They controlled all the major flow and never allowed people of color to "bubble." So, this was/is the reason we gave back to the 'hood in this manna', to keep the money amongst the struggling class. Not everybody adhered to this philosophy, but some of us did!

Fast forward. The year is 1992. One week before my 15th birthday. My son Ausar is born by a woman 11 years my senior. By the age of 17, one was a father of five children three boys and twin girls by three different women. All of these women were older than me. I had some loot; three cars, 1987 Nissan Maxima, 1991 Nissan Maxima, and 1993 Nissan Pathfinder — with all the trimmings. I wasn't a fan of the Benz, Beamer due to the fact this would make one conspicuous. All of my seeds were taken care of and I started setting up accounts for each of them; so they would have money when they turned 18. The goal was 100 dollars large for each of them but one came up short due to my incarceration. In retrospect, I knew I'd fall one day but I didn't think it would be so soon (2 months after my 19th birthday!) I thought I was untouchable but should've known from the flick, 'Untouchable,' that no one is untouchable.

One could go on and on about being shot on two separate occasions, sex plots and overall war stories that are endless! That isn't my intention. The lesson is, one has been there and done that and there's nothing glamorous about the hood, lifestyle, etc. it isn't something we should glorify nor should we condone insalubrious activity. This is one's first time in the pen, 3,000 miles away from home, sentenced to what seems an eternity (23 yrs, 8 months) Note: I received fourteen additional years in two battery cases on peace officers and a possession of an inmate manufactured weapon, which brings my sentence to 37 years!

To all of you youngsters reading this, please stay in school, read more, eat right, and pre-occupy yourself with constructive activity. Use your brain and you can get over the quagmires in your life. Even if you hit a bump in the road, whereas it may impede your higher education, you must have a back up plan and back up to the back-up plan. Technology had put us in a position to depend less on companies, etc. via internet and start multi-million dollar companies out of your house with a website... you can't lose if you utilize some of those 24 billion brain cells in your dome. Jus' a few words... one word. One bond. One God. One love. To teach is to learn twice!

SHELDON THOMPSON

Writing from the Texas Department Of Corrections in Tennessee Colony, TX, we give to you a man who's creations are short, but very powerful. In his first piece he plays on the idea of past, present, and future. Then he goes into defining Madness and Anger in his second piece. He concludes with our personal favorite, 'Truth Is...' where he describes what we perceive and how we perceive it. There's not much more to say because like his poems we're going to keep this introduction short and sweet.

Truth Is...

The essence of reality breaks one's mental realm,
When the course of cognizance was never true at the helm.
Transparent illusion—rejuvenescent mirage of déjà vu
Subconscious memorabilia lain in the cranium dark room,
Visions of our tomorrows, they label as dreams,
Yet when those episodes become manifest what does that actually mean
Met with purpose—readily perceived psychology,
We relate things through allegorical symbology.

Madness, Anger

An imbalanced emotion that is felt when one becomes deprived of reason, as in defining the sole purpose for cause — cause being the cycle of even — even whereas an action has took place, forcing the helm of energy into a dimension which is far from possible reach. Therein you have been shown the cosmic regeneration of pattern and the conscious interpolation of how intricate the Universe is to mankind.

Then, Now, Later . . .

Visions of the yesterday I spent away,
Could have took my time to find an escape
From the madness that surround(s) my thoughts.
Never did I imagine such an empty feeling
As I experience at present within my heart.
Not knowing when this chaos may end troubles my soul—
Separated by tomorrows hopeful; the desire(s) that dwell
Within me today.

Childhood: Stolen Memories/Stolen Dreams

Please take some time to concentrate, s we can reflect on past glories Really listen to what I gotta say within' this passionate little story

I remember when I was young; you all spoiled me like a Bellermino Prep

So young and innocent, now I'm gangbanging, striving and protectin' my rep

Do you remember when you used to call me "Punkin'" but mostly Mikey

Dress me up presentable. Now I wear creased up Ben Davis and Nikes Colors never mattered to me, nor did it matter where I walked

Now I stay with my colors, rain or shine I stay on the block How many times have we had this talk? "Mikey, gangs are really, really bad"

All your family's had faith sayin', "He will be such a wonderful little lad."

Sometimes reality strikes me in the chest, but I shed only tattoo tears Feelin' so old and grown. Accomplished my goals within sixteen years Been through so much shhh in my life, I thought what I got to lose Clicked up with the homies from my 'hood, now I'm branded with tattoos

Ever since I left dad's custody, my life went straight to hell Trust me, no need to worry, I'm eating, sleeping and breathing so well Life is a little harder, I don't depend on anybody for anything I need Right now as it stands, the streets is how I'm striving to succeed

My mom knows what's up when my phone rings: "Mom, I gotta take a little drive"

She has her suspicions on my antics, but really has no clue

I'm stuck in my own world, and truthfully don't know what to do

I wake up in the morning, wondering how much longer I

MIKEY The following comes out of one of our many writing workshops in juvenile hall, but it's important enough to put in The Beat Without. What Mikey demonstrates is not just an honesty and clarity of thought, but also a tremendous strength (which he used to kick his meth habit). But we want so much more for and from him. What we hope for this fine writer is that he sees what few soldiers ever see, and that is that they don't really matter as individuals. Like soldiers in every war, those on the front lines are expendable, cannon fodder to be used and thrown (either because they're caught and sent away, or because they don't live through the experience...). When that happens, another soldier steps into the vacancy, and the soldier that is gone is soon forgotten. That is what we hope this young soldier learns — before it's too late.

have to live

But it's just another day to see what tomorrows got to give My mentality is corrupted now that I've induced so many drugs

Smoke my first joint with these "around-the-corner" wanna be thugs Marijuana is a gateway drug because it led me to crystal meth

Smoke so much of that shhh, I knew I was near my death Broke away form that hold, but still addicted to those marijuana trees

We have all smoked them... Are you really going to sit there and lie to me

I've done a lot of stuff in my life that will remain untold I don't know the sudden change, why my blood turned freezing cold

We are all grown now. That's why I'm telling you, all bs aside

If I would've told you I'm innocent, then that would be a lie

I love you guys to much, why sugarcoat this game

Truthfully I'm still Mikey, that will always remain the same

My love is still love — criminal, gang member or not

I'll never forget that family is all a man really gots

I'm going to enclose this letter. What ever happens please don't cry

But until we meet again, I love you. Goodnight. Bye-bye

NGO Please welcome 15-year-old NGO to The Beat Without. Now an intern at The Beat Within, his poems have already been published in these pages when he wrote from San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center and Log Cabin Ranch. It's not easy, but NGO tells why he's trying to flip the script on his life so that he can succeed in freedom. If he follows through on his own prescription, he's on his way to a better place.

At The Beat Within

Just letting thoughts flow through my head

Sitting at the desk, typing people's work, as I think of what's gonna be said

The people just like me coming from the bottom, tryin' to come up I was doing the same thing, but I just reversed it, going legit- — that's how I'm coming up

'Cause, to me, I can't do it anymore, 'cause I can't do it forever, so what's the point?

We all got to be legit one day, so why not sooner? Selling drugs— there's no point

No point if I can't do it forever, 'cause we got to get a real job or we not gonna make it

Building my experience up and going to school, so I can get a better job that's how I'ma make it

Make it in life, 'cause drugs can't support me in this life, no matter how many pounds I push

No job and I have hella money from selling the pounds — what can I use it on?

'Cause the IRS gonna be on my ass for selling that kush And even if you sell drugs by the pounds, you got to have a very good

A job just to cover it up, so IRS won't be on your ass So you got to go to school, no matter what, or you end up in the system

If you want to do the things you want to do, this the knowledge that I pass

This the truth, homies, 'cause in this life, the ones who don't get caught are the smart ones

And sometimes even the smart ones get caught, too

'Cause no matter how smart you are, there's always someone out there that's smarter then you

Same thing with everything else — there's always someone that be better than you in everything

So you choose what you want to do, 'cause you can't make someone change If they don't want to change, and that's in everything

It always starts with you — remember that, 'cause if you don't wanna do something, you won't do it, so it always starts with you And if you do it for someone else, like, say, you do good for your mom and your mom passes away, then what you gonna do?

Go back to the old way, 'cause you mad, 'cause you hurtin' and you need some love that your boys gonna show you And I ain't sayin' we perfect — we all makes mistakes, but it looks stupid if you be making the same mistake every time Learn from your mistakes, is all I gotta say, 'cause if you don't or you don't wanna change

Then you gonna be making the same mistakes every time And we be making reasons for why we didn't do this and why we didn't do that

But we never really say it was because I didn't want to do it Like an assignment or homework or something we didn't want to do

We make up reasons, like, "Oh, my dog ate my homework," Or, "I lost my homework," but in reality, we didn't want to do it Like I didn't vcome to the meeting 'cause this and that happened And the result is something like

When you do what you tell yourself and others what you are gonna do

It feels good. It's like keeping your word good 'Cause if you keep saying this and that and never do it, then nobody gonna believe you

But if you do what you say you were gonna do Then they gonna believe you, instead of like, "Oh, he just saying that"

I'm not just saying this to be saying this, 'cause all this is the truth, and truly a fact

I ain't got nothing to say right now — I ran out of things to say So I going to end this with one more line

NGO speaks his mind no matter what it is

If it's in his head, he'll say it writing poems about the truth And to me that's fine

I missed out on so many good years
Because I chose to run the
Meanest streets with no fears
Now they got me locked down forced
To stare at bricks all day
To force me to realize what I threw away

check out the rest of Plaz's BWO piece on page 64

